

Franco-Iraqi relations and Fifth Republic foreign policy, 1958-1990

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ABSTRACT

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This study analyses the evolution of France's relations with Iraq since 1958. It seeks to understand the motivations behind French government, state and private sector interests in Iraq. This is done in the dual context of France's economic rivalry with other western powers in the Middle East, and the Iraqi state's attempts to follow an independent foreign policy while using its oil revenues to rapidly industrialise and arm itself.

The text first charts France's rivalry with Britain in the ex-Ottoman empire and its fears of Anglo-American domination of oil supplies. It then demonstrates that while France's early links with Israel continued under President De Gaulle, by the mid-sixties they had been eclipsed by the commercial importance of trade with Arab states. The core text then focuses on France's relationship with Iraq since 1958, the year in which new governments came to power in both states.

Despite the 1972 nationalisation of the Iraq Petroleum company, in which France had a 25% stake, French politicians and businessmen nevertheless gained favourable access to oil supplies, greatly increasing their exports of defence and high technology products, including a nuclear reactor, to Iraq during the seventies. The Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) intensified both bilateral trade links and the indebtedness of Iraq to France. By the mid-eighties what became a de-facto alliance generated severe problems for France's middle eastern policies, particularly towards Iran.

The central themes of the study are the processes of foreign policy formation in France, and the extent and impact of economic interests underlying policy making. The thesis argues that substantial state ownership in France's oil, defence and aeronautical industries, coupled with the common interests and interpretations of a relatively homogeneous and interconnected corps of businessmen, politicians and civil servants, helps explain the continuity of French policy in the region. This is seen to be true despite the change of government, (from Gaullist to Socialist) in France in May 1981.

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Introduction

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1 Objectives

This is a study of the making of French foreign policy in the context of France's relations with the Middle East. The main focus of the text is the decision making of successive Fifth Republic governments and administrations in so far as it shaped the evolution of relations between France and Iraq. The text focuses primarily on the first three decades of the Fifth Republic, from 1958 to 1990.

The study has a series of overlapping objectives, but its overall aim is to evaluate the extent and impact of economic interests in shaping this bilateral relationship. How far do economic interests determine foreign policy? In this specific case, were France's aims, firstly to secure oil supplies and then increase exports of defense and aeronautical equipment, the determining factors in the development of relations between successive administrations in Baghdad and Paris?

In order to ascertain as to whether economic forces were predominant, a variety of other factors are examined. These can be divided into three categories:

- firstly broad geo-strategic considerations, notably de Gaulle and his successors' positioning of France in the cold war;
- secondly the regional constraints and opportunities generated by French policy towards the Arab-Israeli and Iran-Iraq conflicts;
- thirdly, narrower factors linked to the administrative and bureaucratic aspects of French decision making are examined. These include the personal and political affiliations which give cohesion to the elites involved in policy making.

Overall, the text attempts to analyse the notion that French foreign policy making is somehow “different”; that it has unique characteristics differentiating both the policy process and its objectives from those of comparable OECD states. I examine this by looking at two aspects of this alleged specificity; the broad framework and vocabulary of Fifth Republic foreign policy on the one hand, and the often personalised and apparently secretive mechanisms of policy on the other.

- Firstly the overall framework and broad goals of policy. De Gaulle established a unique profile and framework of French foreign policy in the 1960s, which has been maintained and refined by his successors. This provides a specific political context, heritage and vocabulary for subsequent Fifth Republic administrations, through which his Gaullist successors largely defined and differentiated themselves. This proved equally to be the case under the Socialist presidency of François Mitterrand post-1981, the constraints and continuities of Fifth Republic policy in the Middle East far outweighing any notion of ideological or practical policy reorientation.

- A second, subsidiary objective is to evaluate the interplay of private and state interests influencing Fifth Republic foreign policy. In particular the way in which both private and state oil and armaments companies interacted with the foreign policy milieu is examined. It is here that the second alleged specificity of French foreign policy is analysed. Is there a uniquely French way of pursuing foreign policy, and if so, is this a general trait, or something specific to French policy in the Middle East...? The continuity of French policy towards Iraq, despite numerous changes of political and administrative personnel in both France and Iraq, is explained in large part via the continuity, in terms of the shared outlooks and backgrounds, of the men involved in decision making ¹. Relatively small groups of political and technical experts have occupied a succession of influential posts in successive Fifth Republic administrations. They span three distinct spheres, all important in terms of decision making towards Iraqi policy. The first of these spheres is formal government offices (ministries, ministerial cabinets etc.). The

¹ It is a curious and noteworthy fact that women (with the fleeting exception of Edith Cresson as minister of external trade in 1983...) do not feature at all, in either this text, or indeed in the secondary literature used for any of the chapters.

second is the plethora of para-statal entities, which cover a variety of publicly-owned companies (such as Erap/Elf) and numerous quango-type regulatory and advisory bodies. The latter include institutions such as the colossal *Délégation générale pour l'armement* (DGA, involved in arms research and export promotion), the *Direction des carburants* and *Institut français de pétrole* (Dica and IFP, supervising oil research and policy) or the *Commissariat à l'énergie atomique* (CEA, which oversees nuclear matters). The third sphere is companies in the private sector. However, as shall be seen, private companies such as Dassault Aviation have at times been more closely involved with foreign policy than entities in the state sector. Evidently the formal boundaries between spheres two and three have also shifted over the decades, notably during the nationalisation and subsequent re-sale of companies in the eighties. In essence, the text argues that it is the shared values and continuity of personnel, and their frequent shifting of jobs within and between these three spheres that have provided the coherence to French policy vis-à-vis Iraq over almost three decades. This point is further highlighted in Annex C which traces the careers of some of the key actors in policy formulation.

The study is therefore primarily an analysis of French policy and decision making. However, as is explained below, the relationship with Iraq has been chosen because it has broader implications than being simply an interesting “case-study”. The nature of France’s relationship with Iraq necessarily prompts a secondary set of questions linked to the issue as to what extent France was *chosen by* Iraq. Iraq’s leaders clearly envisaged that a partnership with France would advance their strategy of establishing an independent foreign policy, beholden to neither superpower, while using its oil revenues to industrialise rapidly and arm itself.

2 The rationale of the study; why France, why its relationship with Iraq?

The existing republics in both Iraq and France were established almost simultaneously in mid-1958. Apart from this chronological coincidence, at the time precious little linked the two countries. France was a pariah in the Middle East, due to the Suez invasion of 1956, war in Algeria and close relations with Israel. Economically, outside of the Maghreb, France was largely excluded from Arab markets by an Anglo-American dominance, particular in the oil sector. Yet the only,

very partial exception was in Iraq itself, where since the 1920s a French company held a 25% stake in Iraqi oil production. From this inauspicious beginning, by the late 1970s France had become Iraq's principal trading partner, supplying in particular military and nuclear technology. For France, privileged relations with Iraq helped open the gate to wider Arabian markets, allowing it both to weather the 1973/74 oil price rise, and to become the world's third largest arms supplier to non-OECD states by 1980.

It is the telling of this story, coupled with the fact that it has not been told elsewhere, which is the primary reason for focussing on the Franco-Iraqi relationship. In narrating the evolution of these ties over three decades, I also attempt to provide, in terms of themes, chronology and geography, a cross-cutting insight into French foreign policy making.

As stated above, the burgeoning Franco-Iraqi relationship was just one element in a broader renaissance of Franco-Arab relations from the late sixties onwards. The thesis therefore attempts to situate Franco-Iraqi ties within the context of what I term the *reinvention of French Arab policy*². The thesis tries to provide an overview of the series of French policy decisions towards the Middle East, on which, as explained in the following section, there is only an exceedingly sparse, fragmented literature, even in French. These decisions evolved into what became known as "Gaullist" Arab policy, a rather loose set of ideas, draped across a very solid record of commercial success achieved under the governments of de Gaulle's successors, including François Mitterrand after 1981. It has been suggested that the ambivalence of France's stance during the 1990/91 Gulf crisis highlighted the inconsistencies and thus the end of this "Arab policy". Yet in fact the rhetoric and myths of France's post 1958 stance in the Middle East have become a durable part of external projection of France's extra-OECD policy. They both continue to be used throughout the 1990s by politicians of both left and right in the presentation of policy on the Middle East.

² The terms "French Arab policy" and "Franco-Arab relations" are used repeatedly in both the source materials and in the text. Both terms contain geographical and cultural ambiguities. In particular, in general what is being referred to is not Franco-Maghrebi relations; i.e. French relations with Moroccans, Algerians and Tunisians which have their own specific histories and considerable

3 Methodology and bibliographical note.

The methodology of the work (in terms of how I went about it rather than what epistemological approach is used) was straightforward, being based primarily on as wide a reading as possible. As explained below, there is virtually no published secondary material on the subject of Franco-Iraqi relations themselves, and surprisingly little serious literature on broader Franco-Arab relations in either English or French ³. Unsurprisingly, the only exception to this are works on France's relationship with the Israel/Palestine conflict, and bilateral relations with states in the Maghreb. Despite the fact that it has frequently been through the prism of Franco-Israeli relations that broader policy towards the Middle East has been viewed, this literature is only of limited use, rarely making reference to French relations with individual Arab countries beyond the Maghreb ⁴. Chapter two, which provides a broad overview of policy towards the region, including Israel, in the 1950s and 60s, discusses the relevant works. An important aspect of this text is that it provides some initial elements of a new reading of French policy towards the region, examining the manner in which policy towards Iraq and Arabian Gulf countries was, from the mid-seventies, elaborated as a component and complement to France's "Mediterranean policy" ⁵.

The bulk of the secondary material used is therefore culled from a very wide range of sources, primarily periodicals and newspapers, obtained in Paris ⁶. As well as core reading on French politics, politicians and administration, books and dossiers with possible relevance to France's relationship with Iraq (i.e. on oil, energy, arms, nuclear, export promotion etc.) were consulted in order to glean items of relevance to

bibliographies. Rather the "Arab" here refers to the core countries of the Arab East, i.e. N.E Africa, the Levant, Arabia and the Gulf.

³ Both Balta, P. Rulleau, C. *La politique Arabe de la France depuis 1958*, Sinbad, Paris, 1973, and Saint-Prot, C. *La France et le renouveau arabe*, Copernic, Paris, 1980, despite their flaws, are still widely quoted. See also; Frémaux, J. *Le Monde Arabe et la sécurité de la France*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1995. Nouschi, André. *La France et le monde arabe*, Vuibert, Paris, c1994.

⁴ A significant exception to this is Kassir, S & Mardam-Bey, F., *Itinéraires de Paris a Jerusalem* (2 Vols), Institut des études palestiniennes, Washington, 1992.

⁵ The text by Chérigui, H. *La politique méditerranéenne de la France : entre diplomatie collective et leadership*. L'Harmattan, Paris, 1997, provides the best overview of the roots of this policy.

bilateral relations. Evidently this is a somewhat painstaking and idiosyncratic process. In attempting to thread together so many diverse influences on foreign policy, I may have missed, or misunderstood, significant aspects of the task. Having established a basic chronological and thematic framework, the information thus collected was then discussed with as wide a range of actors and observers as my meagre resources permitted. The bulk of the interviews were conducted in France in the summer of 1996, with some subsequent follow-up interviews. As such, both the text's chronological narrative, and the method of researching it are fairly straightforward.

As already noted, the story presented here has not been told before, either in French or English languages. Despite the importance of the relationship, both politically and economically since the early 1970s, literature specifically on long-term Franco-Iraqi relations, be it books or mainstream periodical (newspaper and magazine) articles, was non-existent until 1990⁷. However, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, and the subsequent internal French policy divisions during the 1990-91 confrontation with Iraq, changed this. The sole book on the Franco-Iraqi relationship, *Notre allié Saddam* by Claude Angeli and Stéphanie Mesnier, came out in early 1992. This book is typical of its genre, being an "instant" book of investigative journalism *à la française*. Despite occasional lapses into sensationalism, it is nevertheless an obligatory point of reference. Angeli occupies a unique position in the French political landscape and the book reflects his unparalleled range of contacts and Mesnier's background work. Claude Angeli was also generous with his time, encouragement and contacts with me⁸. The period

⁶ Notably from the Institut d'Etudes Politique (IEP) of Paris' extensive newspaper archives.

⁷ This includes not just high street publications, but also academic journals. Journals such as *Monde Arabe* (Maghreb Mashreq), *Cahiers du Orient* etc., or defence literature, remaining silent on bilateral relations. However, surprising this may seem, it is far from unique. A very similar situation prevailed in terms of (the lack of academic and critical) writing about France's more substantial, and convoluted, policy in Africa until the 1990s.

⁸ Claude Angeli and Stéphanie Mesniers "Notre allié Saddam, O. Orban, Paris, c1992. Angeli was senior editor of *Le Canard Enchaîné*, Paris' leading satirical weekly. Given *Le Canard*'s reputation and contacts, although hastily written, the book was impeccably sourced. I saw only a small fraction of those interviewed by CA and SM and clearly lacked sufficient knowledge of the political context to accurately map the cross-cutting tides of political affiliations and eddies of contradictory dossiers associated with Iraq. Bearing in mind Roland Dumas' links with both *Le Canard* and the Iraq issue, my impression is that a) Angeli could in fact have published a far more explosive book had he so wished, and b), while in one way the story was too good to miss, it was probably individuals involved in the saga who prompted CA to begin the book. The desire to "set the

between August 1990 and the publication of the Angeli and Mesnier book also saw a good deal of coverage of the nature of Franco-Iraqi ties, both in *Le Canard Enchaîné*, and other publications ⁹. August 1990-March 1991 was therefore a watershed not only in terms of French policy towards the Middle East, but also in the writing and reporting on France's Arab policy. This is true both for the brief polemic surrounding the soul-searching over "France's Arab policy" prompted by the war, but also broader press interest in, and investigation of Franco-Arab relations ¹⁰.

Clearly just as there was an upsurge of interest in France's relationship with Iraq, so journalists and analysts in most western countries began to investigate ties with Iraq, resulting in a welter of literature on the "arming of Iraq". In Britain this prompted not only a series of books but the official Scott inquiry and report. Some of the books examining Iraq's military capabilities, included information on Franco-Iraqi links, and where possible I've cross referred this narrative with what have become the standard texts on "the arming of Iraq" in English.¹¹

Given that part of the text's rationale is that it attempts to be an original contribution to French foreign policy analysis, evidently it also engages with and criticises both broader works on French foreign policy, detailed works on specific sectors and

record straight" and settle scores after the bruising watershed of August 1990 was evident in several of those I interviewed in 1996.

⁹ For a sample of such pieces, see: "France-Irak; l'argent et la corruption" (dossier, pp.8-18), *L'Evenement du Jeudi*, 13.9.90. "Vingt ans d'irakophilie française", *Le Monde* 23.8.90 (Laurent Greilsamer). "Les acteurs du lobby pro-irakien", *Quotidien du Paris*, 10.9.90 (J-M Kalfleche). *Commentaire sur un virage*, *Libération* 14.8.90 (Michel Tibon-Cornillot).

¹⁰ The polemic is encapsulated in the then foreign minister, Roland Dumas' broadside against "Gaullist arab policy" in *Le Monde* 12.3.91, and Sammy Cohen's rebuttal, *Le Monde* 21.3.91. On the broader issue of Arab policy See Beau, N. *Paris, Capitale Arabe*, Seuil, Paris, 1995. In large part due to the publicity and disquiet prompted by 1990/91 after this academic and policy journals also began to cover France's relationship with the Middle East more regularly. A thesis comparing French and British reactions to the war was defended in the IEP in 1996. Published as Charrillon, F. *La politique étrangère à l'épreuve du transnational; une étude des diplomatie française et britannique dans la guerre du Golfe*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1999. See also Roy, O. "Sur la politique arabe de la France", *Monde Arabe*, Paris, June 1991, pp.15-20. Also an article with the same title, but by de Gaulle's foreign minister, Couve de Murville, M. "Sur la politique arabe de la France", *Revue d'Etudes Palestiniennes*, 39, Spring 1991, pp.31-38.

¹¹ Darwish, A. & Alexander, G. *Unholy Babylon : the secret history of Saddam's war*, London : Gollancz, 1991. Timmerman, K. R. *The death lobby : how the West armed Iraq*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1992. Timmerman's study kicks off with Saddam Hussein in France, in an uncannily similar way to Angeli's.

themes within French foreign policy ¹². However, to my knowledge, no work has attempted to focus on the interaction of different French policy domains (in this case, primarily oil and arms) on a specific country, certainly not in the Middle East. As explained in section one above, the text therefore tries to look at the specificities of French policy making via a practical examination of a very particular set of bilateral relations.

Evidently it is not appropriate to provide a bibliographical essay on the nature of writing about French foreign policy more generally. Clearly there are numerous broader works on French foreign policy; these are cited where appropriate and the conclusion tries to make some wider points about the nature and shortcomings of such works. However, it should be noted at the outset that this literature is relatively fragmentary, particularly when compared with the volume of work on say British or US foreign policy. Accounts of French foreign policy are curiously partial, at least until the 1990s. Works in the French language following a fairly set format, either of the curricula taught in the *Grandes Ecoles* ¹³, or the fairly staid format of (occasionally quasi-hagiographic) conferences and books on the evolution of foreign policy under successive presidential mandates. Such books invariably have chapters, of very variable quality, on policy towards each region ¹⁴. Curiously, it has often been left to outsiders, writing in English, to provide a more critical overview ¹⁵. The reasons for this lie largely beyond this study, in part reflecting structures of academia and international relations in France, linked to struggles within French academia between disciplines, particularly law, political science and international relations ¹⁶.

¹² For example, on the arms trade, Kolodziej, E.A., *Making and marketing arms : the French experience and its implications for the international system*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987, and the works of Pierre Péan on the oil and nuclear industries as well as Franco-Iranian relations.

¹³ In particular, the numerous works of Alfred Grosser at the IEP; Grosser, A. *Affaires extérieures : la politique de la France, 1944-1989*, Flammarion, Paris, 1989. A similarly standard work is; Dalloz, J. *Le France et le monde depuis 1945*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1993.

¹⁴ See: Cohen, S. Smouts, M.-C., *La politique extérieure de Valéry Giscard D'Estaing*, FNSP, Paris, 1985; Diallo, T. *La politique étrangère de George Pompidou*, librairie générale de droit, Paris, 1992; and, Vaisse, M., *La Grandeur; politique étrangère du général de Gaulle 1958-1969*, Fayard, Paris, 1998.

¹⁵ Symptomatically, Vaisse's 1998 work, a new generation of archival studies, concludes by drawing on foreign works, notably Stanley Hoffman etc. Cerny, P. G. *The politics of grandeur : ideological aspects of de Gaulle's foreign policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980. Kolodziej, E.A. *French international policy under De Gaulle and Pompidou : the politics of grandeur*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1974.

¹⁶ These aspects of French IR publishing are evident to anyone with comparative experience of French foreign affairs. They are touched on in the essay by Girard, M., "the uncertainty of influence, France", pp.51-63, in Girard, M. et al, *Theory and practice in foreign policy making : national*

One result of this is that often it has been the more instant and “investigative” writings referred to in the preceding paragraph which have in fact provided the initial, and in many cases enduring, insights into the underlying forces determining foreign policy. Evidently *Notre Allié Saddam* typifies this trend, and is exemplary in that it arose in part through extended investigation by journalists linked to one of the few publications systematically probing the underbelly of French politics¹⁷. Similarly, Pierre Péan’s books - on France’s relations with Africa, the oil industry, Franco-Iranian ties, corruption etc. - while initially sneered at by many, notably in universities, later came to be taken more seriously, indeed by the late nineties Péan was seen as a mainstream writer.

This milieu of investigative journalism, and associated rash of more speculative and polemical works has thrown up a good deal of material of tangential use to this text. In the 1980s there was an rush of instant writing about foreign affairs and presidential politics, enhanced initially by Mitterrand’s election and the intensification of both left and right wing factionalism within politics. This was further amplified during the period of left-right *cohabitation*, in 1986-88. In particular this produced an exceedingly uneven and problematic series of books on the divisions within France’s multifarious (and occasionally nefarious...) secret services¹⁸.

There is also a voluminous literature associated with the capture of French hostages in Lebanon during 1985-6, which is drawn on only very partially in chapter 7. A comprehensive sifting of all the available sources on this is beyond the scope of this text. Indeed one of the themes of French policy in the region in the eighties is that a

perspectives, Pinter, New York, 1994. Also p. 154 in; Wallace, W. “Between two worlds...”, in Hill, C. & Beshoff, P. Two worlds of international relations ..., Routledge, London, 1994.

¹⁷ Both the title and content of Angeli’s “Notre Allié Saddam” consciously echoed Gilles Perrault’s book on Franco-Moroccan relations. Published in 1990 this was both a surprise best seller and subsequently had a significant impact on bilateral relations. Perrault, G. *Notre ami le roi*, Gallimard, Paris, 1990.

¹⁸ Ockrent, C. *Dans le secret des princes*, interviews with de Marenches, Stock, Paris, c1986. Marion, P. *Le Pouvoir sans visage : le complexe militaro-industriel*, Calmann-Lévy, Paris, 1990. Villeneuve, C. Péret, J.-P. *histoire secrète du terrorisme: les juges de l'impossible*, Plon, Paris, c1987. Guisnel, J. Violet B. *Services secrets, le pouvoir et les services de renseignements sous François Mitterrand*, La Decouverte/enquetes, Paris, 1988. See also Faligot, R. Krop, P. *La Piscine; les*

purely bilateral approach, looking only at Franco-Iraqi ties, provides a blinkered view of foreign policy, given the entangled nature of France's relationship with both Iran-Iraq, which was in part played out via Lebanon, hostage taking etc.

Finally there are two spheres of writing specifically on Mitterrand's two presidential terms of relevance to the text; firstly the memoirs and detailed writings claiming to be accurate records of decision making of the period ¹⁹. Secondly, there are now beginning to be more analytical works on the foreign policy of the eighties, some of which can clearly be linked to theories and ideas evident in English language foreign policy analysis and international relations ²⁰.

4 The text's limitations

There are four obvious limitations to the research and the resulting text in its current form:

- Firstly, the examination of so many diverse aspects of bilateral relations necessarily limits both the depth of analysis on specific issues, and, hopefully to a lesser degree, the overall coherence of the text. Thus in attempting to evaluate the influence of France's oil industry, the armaments sector, as well as nuclear and civilian industries upon the foreign policy process, the text leaves itself open to the charge of inconsistency.

- Secondly, as indicated in the preceding section, although the geographical and chronological scope of the text appears at first sight to be very clearly defined, a more systematic analysis of the Franco-Iraqi axis would in fact require delving deeper into French relations with other Arab and Middle Eastern states. In particular, given that Iran and Iraq were at war with each other between 1980-88, Franco-Iranian relations. This in turn would enhance the broader aspect of

services secrets françaises 1944-84, Seuil, Paris, 1985. Faligot, R. Kauffer, R. Au coeur de L'Etat l'espionnage, Autrement, Paris, 1983, especially ch.4 on P.Marion and Mitterrand.

¹⁹ Attalli, J. Verbatim; Chronique des années ... (3 Vols), Fayard, Paris, 1995. Favier, P. & Martin-Roland, M. La décennie Mitterrand (2 Vols), Seuil, Paris, 1995. Védrine, H, Les mondes de François Mitterrand : à l'Elysée, 1981-1995, Fayard, Paris, 1996.

²⁰ Cohen, S. Mitterrand et la sortie de la guerre froide, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1998. A collection of papers and interventions of a round table in May 1997 evaluating foreign policy during Mitterrand's second *septennat* (1988-95). Many key figures in the administration were present. Hubert Védrine's numerous interventions were given added significance by his, largely unanticipated, appointment, two weeks later, as Jospin's foreign minister.

the work in terms of its attempts to retrace the post-1962 “reinvention” of French policy in the region.

- A third obvious limitation of the text is its lack of use of Iraqi sources. While the work is primarily an analysis of French policy making, it is evident that a fuller understanding of Iraqi perceptions and motivations would have greatly enhanced the study. Iraqis living in France have written little, and those based elsewhere, understandably do not see the French angle as crucial ²¹. Under normal circumstances, understanding Iraqi perceptions could have been done via interviews, however, the nineties have been anything but “normal circumstances” for most Iraqis. To a limited extent, some of the issues discussed here were discussed with Iraqis in London and Paris. The conditions of post-1991 embargo and sanctions meant there appeared little point in going to Baghdad and attempting to identify and interview people who had been central to Franco-Iraqi relations.

- This in turn links to the final, and most obvious, shortcoming of the research and text, that it deals with issues which are too contemporary to be analysed in detail. The legitimacy and need for such a study surely cannot be queried, particularly given the lack of literature outlined above, and, as already explained, the text’s attempts to contribute to broader analysis of French foreign policy. However, there is a second, more conjunctural problem given the post-1991 predicament of western relations with Iraq in general, and French policy towards Iraq in particular. The research and writing was undertaken, and to a certain extent framed in the very particular context of the present. For Iraqis that of sanctions, but also of France’s singular stance among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Indeed given the topicality and importance of this contemporary debate, most people, certainly all those outside of France, with whom this research was discussed in the latter half of the eighties, found it odd that the text be concerned primarily with the *pre*-1990 period, rather than the current post-sanctions situation.

²¹ Several hundred Iraqis wrote theses in French universities during the 1980s. While many were in natural sciences, of those in social sciences, only a handful dealt with aspects of Franco-Iraqi relations, see Appendix E.

5 Structure of the thesis.

The structure of the text is both chronological and thematic.

Introduction

Chapter 1 Anglo-French rivalry in the Middle East, the origins of France's oil industry and the formation of the Iraq Petroleum Company, 1914-39. This examines the rivalry between the great powers in the Ottoman Empire at the end of the first world war; the granting of sequestered German shares in the Turkish Petroleum Company to France, and the subsequent formation of the *Compagnie française des pétroles*, which became the French component of what was established as the Iraq Petroleum Company after the discovery of oil in Kirkuk.

Chapter 2 Emerging from Israeli and Algerian shadows: the foundations of Fifth Republic foreign policy in the Middle East 1956-1967. This provides a broad account of France in the Middle East during the 1950s and 60s. De Gaulle's resentment at both France's loss of the Levant and subsequent Anglo-American presence; the arming of Israel and the Algerian war meant that by the time the Fifth Republic was formed, France was a pariah in the region among Arab states. While maintaining an alliance with Israel, de Gaulle's foreign policy framework nevertheless provided for the reestablishment of relations with Arab countries from 1962 onwards. This policy was greatly enhanced by de Gaulle's criticism of Israel in the June 1967 war.

Chapter 3 French oil policy and relations with Iraq to 1972. The chapter examines the background to the re-establishment of relations with Iraq, 1958-63. The CFP's role in post-1961 IPC oil negotiations is then evaluated, with the specificity of the CFP's stance to Iraq vis-à-vis the other IPC partners highlighted. The impact of the June 1967 war upon Iraqi oil policy is examined. The aftermath of the war created an opportunity for French interests to work in Iraq and ERAP/Elf entered Iraq in late 1967. Finally the chapter examines the background and *bilan* of the Iraqi leader General Aref's February 1968 visit to France.

Chapter 4 Iraqi foreign policy, France and the nationalisation of Iraqi oil to June 1972. This chapter analyses the way in which the Franco-Iraqi relationship fitted within broader *Iraqi* foreign policy priorities, in particular Iraq's links with the Soviet Union. It then presents the events which led up to the June 1972 nationalisation of the IPC and Saddam Hussein's first visit to Paris in the weeks following nationalisation.

Chapter 5 France and Iraq, commercial and military ties to 1979. Chapter 5 examines the background to president George Pompidou's policy towards the Arab world via a presentation of his policy on the arms embargoes decreed by de Gaulle, and France's post-1969 relations with Libya. It then evaluates the crucial role that Pompidou's last foreign minister, Michel Jobert played in weaving together a more coherent energy policy with France's burgeoning relations with Arab countries such as Libya and Iraq. The chapter then looks at Jobert's unique contribution to the modernisation of the machinery of French foreign policy before going on to examine some of the writers and thinkers who were influential in crafting Gaullist approaches towards the Arab world. Finally chapter 5 presents the post-1974 policies of Giscard d'Estaing and Jacques Chirac towards Iraq.

Chapter 6 *Plus ça change...continuity* under Mitterrand; Israel's destruction of Iraq's nuclear reactor, the impact of the Iran-Iraq war. This chapter firstly examines the Franco-Iraqi nuclear cooperation begun under Chirac and Giscard in 1975 and the way in which the composition of Franco-Iraqi trade increasingly involved military hardware by the late 1970s. The Iranian revolution and Iraq's launching of war against Iran in 1980 was to greatly increase this trend. Despite the fact that when in opposition François Mitterrand had criticised Franco-Iraqi ties, the chapter then analyses why it was that very quickly after his election in May 1981 Mitterrand endorsed France's de-facto alliance with Iraq. This stance was reinforced both by revolutionary Iran's hostility to France, and by the Socialist government's need to dissuade petro-dollar rich Arab gulf states from withdrawing funds from France (and thus further weakening the beleaguered Franc). The new administration therefore strove to prove that it was not considering a shift in either its policy towards Israel or Iraq. . Israel's bombing of the Iraq's Tammuz/Osiraq reactor presented Mitterrand with his first major foreign policy crisis and Iraqi calls for France to rebuild the reactor was a constant theme of relations from 1981 onwards.

Chapter 6 concludes by examining how, despite rising debts to France, Iraq managed to ensure increased supplies of advanced French weaponry during 1981-83

Chapter 7 1984-90: “normalisation” with Iran and hostages in Lebanon, Iraqi debt, arms sales and *cohabitation*. This chapter presents the Iranian backlash to France’s apparently unconditional support for Iraq in the war against Tehran. Following the appointment of Roland Dumas as foreign minister in 1984, the government attempted to mend fences with Iran. However, this proved a protracted and painful process, which was further complicated firstly by the taking of French hostages by Iranian proxies in Lebanon and then with the election of a right-wing government in France in March 1986. The 1986-88 period of political *cohabitation* creates an unprecedentedly complex pattern of foreign policy decision making. Despite rapprochement with Iran by 1988, Franco-Iraqi relations remain locked into a vicious circle of oil, debt and arms. Iraq was partially successful in leveraging additional arms supplies from France in exchange for barter payments of oil, despite mounting civil and military debts. However, by the time a Socialist administration returns to power as Mitterrand is elected for a second *septennat* in 1988, and the Iran-Iraq war ends, attempts by Dassault and the ministry of defence to upgrade relations remain overshadowed by problems of debt repayment.

Conclusion Iraq and the specificities of French foreign policy; the same goals by different means? The conclusion reviews the aims established in this introduction, looking at the specificities of French Fifth Republic foreign policy making in terms of its policy objectives and both the mechanisms and processes of policy making. It also reviews what light the thesis has been able to shed upon debates about the nature of elites in French politics and the issue of military-industrial interests in policy making as well as what has been learned of the broader issue of what the thesis terms the reinvention of Arab policy during the Fifth Republic.

Chapter One.

Anglo-French rivalry in the Middle East, the origins of France's oil industry and the formation of the Iraq Petroleum Company, 1914-39.

vc

- 1 Introduction
- 2 France's post-war oil problem
- 3 Post-war struggle over the Turkish Petroleum Company
- 4 Anglo-French negotiations over political spheres of influence; Sykes-Picot and beyond
- 5 Oil negotiations
- 6 The disputed sovereignty of Mosul
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Anglo-French rivalry in the Middle East, the origins of France's oil industry and the formation of the Iraq Petroleum Company, 1914-39.

1 Introduction

Chapters one and two provide historical background necessary to the subsequent discussion of the evolution of France's relationship with Iraq during the Fifth Republic. Chapter one firstly examines the Anglo-French rivalry underpinning the division of the Ottoman Empire into respective spheres of influence after 1916. It then focuses specifically on the protracted negotiations over oil rights in Mesopotamia between 1916-28. These resulted in France acquiring a share in the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) whose rights over oil in what by 1921 became the kingdom of Iraq were eventually confirmed as an integral part of the post-war settlement. The French stake in the TPC prompted the creation of the *Compagnie Française des Pétroles*, the French national oil company which by the late 1960s became known as TOTAL. The CFP became the central pillar of both the French oil industry in general and France's subsequent relationship with Iraq in particular. Chapter one locates the CFP's stake in Iraqi oil within two broader thematic contexts, both of which have bearing on more contemporary discussions of the French presence in Iraq.

- The first theme is that of great power rivalry over oil resources. Whilst French attempts to establish itself as an oil producer occur against a broader background of commercial rivalry between Britain and the United States, we can see in this period the roots of French resentment at Anglo-American domination of Middle Eastern oil. The conclusive 1928 agreement over Iraqi oil exploration established the framework for subsequent oil development in the Middle East. In this the CFP was a relatively minor actor.

- The second theme is the attempt, which runs throughout the thesis, to delineate the respective roles, weight and influence of state and private French interests in the making of foreign policy. In this case it is French politicians' uncertainties over the state's aims in the Near East following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, coupled with domestic debate over the state's role in regulating oil

industry, which determine the nature of both the *Compagnie française des pétroles* and its participation in the Iraq Petroleum Company.

A superficial, retrospective glance at the key events in the areas of the Middle East which became Syria and Iraq in the decades following 1918 suggest a relatively straightforward evolution of the contours of political control and petroleum development in the Middle East. British forces' physical control of much of the region at the close of the war was translated into mandates over Transjordan, Palestine and Iraq. France gained control over Syria and what became Lebanon, although Cilicia, which had also been coveted by French colonialists, became part of the Turkish republic following Turkish-Greek hostilities in 1920-22 and the treaty of Lausanne signed in 1923. After some hesitation, in 1921 Britain opted for a monarchy in Iraq headed by King Faisal whom the French had summarily expelled from Syria the previous year. Whilst France had abandoned its claims over the oil-bearing province Mosul to the British in 1919, it was not until 1926 that the protracted dispute between Turkey and Britain over the province was settled in the latter's favour and Mosul was incorporated into Iraq. This in turn consolidated and clarified the terms of the pre-war concession of the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) in the region. Protracted negotiations over how firstly French and then American capital should be incorporated into the TPC were hastened by the discovery in 1927 of substantial oil deposits in Kirkuk. This then spurred a decision on how to resolve the prolonged disputes over both the internal modalities of the TPC's operations, and the routes that the pipelines needed to transport oil to the Mediterranean should take.

Yet in 1918 none of these developments were inevitable. They emerged from a complex interplay of western interests competing to control former territories of the Ottoman Empire, on which there is already an extensive historiography. The process was characterised by two, inextricably intertwined trends. The first of these was Anglo-French diplomatic and economic rivalry fuelling attempts to create respective spheres of direct control and diplomatic influence out of the former provinces of the

Ottoman Empire. Elie Kedourie dubbed this dimension a “dialectic of rivalry”¹ underpinning most of the negotiations and diplomatic manoeuvring over territory and oil during the period. Secondly there was the broader struggle to establish oil rights in the region. Prior to the 1914 war, this had been initially between rival European companies (essentially British and Dutch) but during the 1920s increasingly involved the incorporation of American economic interests into the division of the Middle East. It is necessary to briefly review these events both because they determined the specific nature of France’s holding in the IPC, but also because they provided a broader backdrop to France’s presence in the Middle East, without which decisions and presentation of policy under the Fifth Republic in the 1960s cannot be understood.

2 France’s post-war oil problem

The roots of French owned oil production and refining capacity lie in two apparently unrelated consequences of the 1914-18 war. The first was the evident military weakness arising from France’s dependence upon foreign owned oil sources during the war. The second was the seizure of German-owned oil assets in the Ottoman Empire. These were sequestered by the British government and the idea then developed that Deutsche Bank shares, notably in the Turkish Petroleum Company, should be transferred to France following the war.

The war meant that French political and business leaders became acutely conscious of their dependence upon foreign owned oil supplies. The war had heightened awareness amongst all the powers of the logistical and strategic importance of oil, particularly for naval power. Much of the British Navy was converted from coal to oil power in 1912-13 and in May 1914 the British government purchased a controlling share in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC, later AIOC, then British Petroleum)². Whilst this decision is frequently portrayed as having been

¹ Kedourie, E. Great Britain, the other powers and the Middle East after world war I, p.9, in Dann, U. (ed.) the Great powers and the Middle East 1919-1939, Holmes and Meier, New York, 1988.

² Ferrier, R.W. The history of the British Petroleum Company, Vol.1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982, ch.5.

taken largely under the pressure from the then first Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, in reality it was the result of a collective decision by the admiralty and a growing realisation and acceptance in government that henceforth the supplies of oil would form a key part of national security ³. The decision was crucial in shaping the British state's subsequent involvement in the oil exploration and production. It also influenced the way in which different departments of government perceived negotiations over Britain's post-war involvement in Mesopotamia, which by this time was believed to contain large deposits of oil.

Whilst the British government had a direct stake in Anglo-Persian, which anyhow was largely owned by British capital, the French government had no such direct involvement with its domestic oil companies. French capital had been involved in oil interests in central Europe, notably Rumania. But oil in France was supplied via a cartel of small firms who imported from the Dutch, American and British companies who had begun producing oil in large quantities for the international market in the previous decade. These companies also had their own subsidiaries operating in France. Royal Dutch Shell, Anglo-Persian's principal rival in European markets, in particular was well established in France. As well as having subsidiaries in France, Royal Dutch Shell had several French shareholders, notably the Rothschild banking family. Subsidiaries of the large foreign companies operated alongside a host of far smaller, local firms who were primarily marketing agencies. France's naval and ground forces were totally dependent upon imported supplies under an agreement signed between the government and the cartel of local agents who relied upon foreign suppliers in 1914.

France suffered persistent oil shortages from mid-1917. These severely impeded its war effort. It is generally held that in December 1917 France's fighting capacity was saved from collapse by emergency oil deliveries from the USA. Certainly, following French premier Clemenceau's direct appeal for help from President Wilson, additional supplies were delivered to France. German submarines' disruption of

³ Jones, G. The state and the emergence of the British oil industry, Macmillan, London, 1980, p.27.

supplies, coupled with poor planning in France appear to have been the principal cause of the shortages. However, a more detailed analysis of France's oil stocks in 1917/18 suggest that the real shortage was partially exaggerated and may be better understood in the context of France's attempts to lessen Standard Oil's dominance of their domestic market ⁴.

What is clear is that both the public and politicians' perceptions of the oil crisis of 1917, and of France's acute dependence upon foreign, particularly American, sources of oil were to play a key role in subsequent French attempts to regulate the industry. However, the formulation of a coherent national oil policy was impeded by the vested interests of existing suppliers, and the weak political system of the post-war years. Shortages of oil during the war prompted a series of largely indecisive investigations in France. A *Comité générale du pétrole* was created in July 1917 to investigate the problem of oil supplies but failed to address the problem of foreign dependency. The *comité* was headed by Senator Henri Bérenger, who was also France's principal negotiator with Britain over the partition of oil interests in the Middle East and elsewhere after the war. Following the war the *comité's* profile, was heightened by concern in France over aggressive competition from foreign, largely American companies, Standard Oil suspending supplies in 1920/21 due to disagreements over quotas and market share in France. Such disputes, coupled with an increasingly powerful lobby in France in favour of importing Russian oil and the election of the radical *Cartel des gauches* government in early 1924, was to lead to the creation in January 1925 of a more powerful regulatory body. This was the *Office national des combustibles liquides* (ONCL), which became the principal state agency for guiding oil policy. It was to be the ONCL which oversaw the major review of National Petroleum Policy following mounting concern at the activities of domestic and foreign owned trusts in the economy in 1928. However, as is explained later in the text, it had limited power over the CFP, which was a private company, or France's role in Iraqi oil.

⁴ Nowell, G. *Mercantile States and the world oil cartel 1900-1939*, pp.107-110, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1994.

3 The post-war struggle over the Turkish Petroleum Company

The Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) was formed in 1912 by an alliance of banking and oil interests, in the hope of obtaining a concession to develop oil in the Ottoman provinces of Mesopotamia. There had long been small scale working of oil in the region, notably around Mosul and it was widely assumed that there were commercially viable deposits, such as those which were exploited in and around the Caspian Sea and Persia prior to 1914. At this time the TPC was just one of a series of rival prospective concessionaires, each backed by a variety of external powers. The original TPC partners were primarily Anglo-German, with Deutsche Bank (who already held the related concession to construct a railway to Baghdad) and the British controlled Turkish National Bank, as the principal shareholders. The existing oil companies, Anglo-Persian (which obtained a concession for oil exploration in Persia in 1901) and Royal Dutch Shell, whose main activities stemmed from East Indies oil, also held shares in the company.

In March 1914 the British government restructured and simplified the shareholding in the company. The deal known as the “*foreign office agreement*” gave the oil companies a far higher profile and ensured that the company would be under predominantly British control. This was achieved by allocating the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) 50% of the shares. With the British government already having purchased a controlling share in APOC, this gave the British government a direct stake in the TPC. The remaining shares were divided between Royal Dutch Shell and Deutsche Bank, who each held a 23.5% stake. Calouste Gulbenkian, the Armenian entrepreneur who was a major shareholder in the Turkish National Bank, and had been instrumental in negotiations over the concession with the Ottoman administration, held the remaining 5% of shares. After protracted negotiations, the TPC signed an agreement with the Ottoman Grand Vizier in June 1914 granting it mineral rights in the vilayets of Baghdad and Mosul ⁵. This agreement was signed on the eve of the war which, four years later would lead to defeat and

⁵ Kent, M. *Oil and Empire; British policy and Mesopotamian oil, 1900-1920*, Chapter 6, Macmillan, London, 1976.

dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. The legitimacy of the TPC's pre-war oil concession was to become central to the bargaining between the rival great powers, and international oil companies over the future political shape of the region after the war.

The outcome of the various series of negotiations which were to determine the post-war form of France's economic involvement in the region rested upon three separate, yet inextricably inter-linked issues facing the victorious powers.

- Firstly, was the 1914 TPC concession seen to be legitimate in the post-Ottoman settlement; and therefore would it provide the framework for post-war oil development?

- Secondly, who should control the sequestered, German shares in the company? Ownership of these shares would determine the balance of forces between existing oil companies, particularly the rivals APOC and Shell within the TPC. It would also be crucial in determining the degree of access Britain and France envisaged allowing American interests to Middle Eastern oil.

- Thirdly, who was to have *political* control over the territories of Mosul and Basra? Discussions between Britain and France during the war assumed it would be one of the powers or some form of quasi-autonomous Arab entity. Immediately after the war the picture was complicated by the Turkish state's claim to Mosul.

The answer to the first issue soon became clear, governments and companies all had an interest in upholding the legitimacy of the pre-war TPC concession. Anglo-Persian and Shell both preferred to uphold their existing claims to Mesopotamian oil via the TPC than lobby for a new concession, in which they would undoubtedly have had to contend with American companies. With Anglo-Persian holding the majority stake in the TPC, the British authorities clearly had an interest in upholding the validity of the TPC concession when it came to post-war oil concessions.

In the oil negotiations, France's weakness on the ground was compensated for by its effective alliance with Royal Dutch Shell. The British government and Anglo-

Persian's prime concern came to be to keep the American companies of Standard Oil out. The only way of doing this was to incorporate Shell into a settlement. This was clearly facilitated by the fact that Shell were part of the original TPC concession, and thus if Britain upheld the legitimacy of the concession, it also necessarily affirmed the rights of Shell to participate in the company. The desire of Shell and the French government to see the TPC developed was consolidated by the idea that the German shares in the company should be transferred to France. It was evident that the structure of the original TPC would need to be altered as the defeat of Germany and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire meant that German assets were sequestered. These assets included the Deutsche Bank's 23.5% of shares in the Turkish Petroleum Company. Although these shares were eventually ceded to the French state only in 1920, as mentioned earlier the idea that they be transferred to France was circulating well before end of the war. There were obvious attractions for both French politicians and Shell directors of France being brought into the TPC via the German shares. For the French, a stake in the TPC would alleviate the problems of oil supplies, for Shell it appeared initially to offer a way of competing with Anglo-Persian. For these reasons, the British and French administrations supported the transfer of shares to France, a manoeuvre which had the added attraction of keeping the American oil interests out of the Middle East.

The idea that the sequestered German shares in the TPC be transferred into French ownership seems to have originated with Gulbenkian, whose personal interests were allied most closely to those of Royal Dutch Shell. Gulbenkian himself claims the credit for floating the idea that the sequestered German shares in the TPC might be transferred to France ⁶. He had suggested the move to Senator Henri Bérenger. Bérenger benefited from prime minister Clemenceau's patronage to become head of the *Comité générale des pétroles* at its creation in July 1917. As already mentioned, the CGP's role was to oversee France's oil strategy following concerns of oil shortages the previous winter. Like Clemenceau Bérenger favoured the Rothschilds' banking interests in the Royal Dutch Shell group as being the closest thing to a

⁶ Gulbenkian, C. "Memoirs...", manuscript in US State Dept. Library, Washington, 1945, pp20 & 32. Quoted in Nowell, 1994.

“French” oil interest at the time. Shell’s strategy was to acquire the shares via its French subsidiary, *Société Française pour l’exploitation des pétroles*, created in part for this purpose. They would thus gain an equal footing within the TPC with Anglo-Persian, then their arch rival. This in turn would put an end to the long-standing discussions about a possible APOC-Shell merger which began in late 1917 and continued intermittently until May 1919. The move was resisted by major Shell shareholders as a thinly disguised hostile take-over.

French banking groups in competition with the Rothschilds were understandably less keen on the idea of Shell becoming the predominant oil interest in France. Notably the *Banque de Paris et des Pays Bas*, which already had extensive interests in Rumanian oil and American oil subsidiaries in France, opposed the move. In a comprehensive analysis of the French inter-war oil market, G.P. Nowell argues persuasively that it was rivalry between private capitalist interests which was the determining force shaping post-war French oil policy ⁷. It was primarily competition between rival financial interests in the French domestic oil market which would undermine the idea that the TPC shares should simply be handed to Shell. Instead a domestic oil company would be created with the support of a wide range of French banking and oil interests. This was to be a protracted process, which occurred at a time of domestic political upheaval. Only in 1924 was it to finally lead to the establishment of the CFP.

4 Anglo-French negotiations over political spheres of influence; Sykes-Picot and beyond

Following the outbreak of the war which was to result in the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the great powers began to consider political re-division of the Middle East. France had long-standing, and substantial financial interests the Ottoman Empire, having a long tradition of political and trade relations with the

⁷ Nowell, 1994.

Ottomans ⁸. Half of all Ottoman debt was held by French interests and from 1898 France was increasingly preoccupied with growing German influence in the region ⁹. The Ottoman alliance with Germany in the first year of the war served to consolidate the Triple Entente, between France, Britain and Tsarist Russia, in the Constantinople Agreement of March 1915.

Against a background of alliance in war, but deep, mutual suspicions over post-war intentions in the Middle East, discussions continued between the French and British governments over defining their respective spheres of influence in the region. These were eventually traced in an initial blueprint to become known as the Skyes-Picot agreement, which was signed on May 16 1916. Although the agreement was to go through numerous modifications, particularly concerning the Ottoman provinces of Mosul and Palestine, it nevertheless delineated the broad spheres of influence around which subsequent debate and actions would revolve. The original agreement divided the former Ottoman provinces into broad zones of influence, France taking the northern swathe of Greater Syria. Part of Palestine was originally envisaged as an international zone with Britain having predominance over the remainder of Palestine and all of Mesopotamia. In the original Sykes-Picot agreement the Ottoman province of Mosul was included in the French sphere of influence as part of Syria. Two “intermediate” zones, designated as A and B were left between the French and British zones, notionally for the establishment of independent Arab states each under the influence of one of the two powers.

Oil interests do not appear to have figured highly in either sides’ negotiating strategy in drafting the Sykes Picot agreement. Whilst some British interests, notably those in the India Office and Navy, did argue that Mosul should be included in Britain’s sphere of influence, because of its potential to produce oil, at least until 1917 the War Office’s overriding concern was to get France to provide a buffer against the threat of

⁸ The 1536 Franco-Ottoman treaty has, somewhat fancifully but indelibly been enrolled into the modern mythology of France’s Middle Eastern relations. See Balta, P. *La politique Arabe de la France*, Sinbad, Paris, 1973. On the 1536 capitulations and international relations, see Naff, T. “the Ottoman empire and Europe” in Bull, H Watson A. *The expansion of international society*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1984.

possible Russian encroachment. This long-standing, geo-strategic argument prevailed and Mosul was duly left to the French ¹⁰. Nevertheless, mindful of APOC's stake in TPC, and the fact that the most likely oil deposits were in the Mosul area, the British were quick to seek assurances from the French over access to oil. They asked that, despite the fact that Mosul was in an area of French influence under the terms of the Sykes Picot agreement, the prospective oil interests of Britain, by which was meant the TPC concession in which the APOC was dominant, would not be affected. On 15 May 1916, the day before the Sykes-Picot agreement was signed, Britain's foreign secretary Edward Grey wrote to France's ambassador in London, Paul Cambon requesting that British economic concessions in the area designated as a French sphere of influence would be respected. Cambon affirmed this in writing the same day, on condition that French interests under Britain's control would be respected reciprocally. Clearly the primary concern behind this move was concern over the status of the TPC's pre-war concessions obtained from the Ottoman Vizier. For France it had no obvious importance, France at that time had no stake in TPC and anyhow Mosul lay within the French sphere of influence. Oil concerns were not uppermost in French negotiators' minds ¹¹. The significance of both the TPC concession and control of Mosul steadily grew in 1918-19 as the powers' reliance upon oil was felt.

Before discussing the parallel series of Anglo-French negotiations over oil in Mesopotamia, it is worth noting that clear differences in style, although barely greater coherence in actual policy outcomes, were evident in France and Britain's approach to the Middle Eastern negotiations which culminated in the Sykes Picot agreement. In Britain the policy was extensively debated by a wide range of government departments. The War Office, Foreign Office, India Office and Admiralty, were all represented on the Bunsen Committee which initially produced a report on "*British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia*" in the spring of 1915. This was submitted to the

⁹ Fulton, L.B. "France and the end of the Ottoman empire", in Kent, M. (ed) *The great Powers and the end of the Ottoman empire*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1984.

¹⁰ Jones, G. *The state and the emergence of the British oil industry*, Macmillan, London, 1980, p.194.

cabinet and became the basis for subsequent negotiations with the French which culminated the following year in the Sykes Picot agreement. In the run-up to the peace accords in Paris in 1919 the Bunsen committee had become the Eastern committee, chaired by the foreign secretary Lord Curzon

In stark contrast to this collegiate British way of working, for the French Picot was charged solely to negotiate, reporting only to his immediate superior in the Quai d'Orsay, Berthelot. Both were active in colonial lobbies and Picot was also a leading member in colonial *comités*, lobbying for a more forceful policy over Syria. Even at this early stage, there was a marked difference in France's formulation and implementation of policy, French policies being more personalised and somewhat chaotic ¹². It is tempting to see in this a precursor of the heavily factionalised and personalised decision making which would characterise French policy making towards the region in the Fourth Republic (notably in the lead up to Suez in 1956, see chapter 2) as well as the Fifth Republic. Notwithstanding these striking differences in foreign policy formulation, it is ironic that the positions of both administrations were overridden by Prime Ministers acting alone, notably over the issue of Mosul.

5 Oil negotiations

Just thirty months after the Sykes-Picot agreement had been signed, the relative positions of France and Britain in the Middle East at the end of the war in the autumn of 1918 had shifted considerably. This was due to three factors:

- Firstly, not only had Britain won military control of the bulk of the Ottoman territories, but victory had been achieved with minimal French military support. At the end of the war the only French troops in the region were a force of 800 officers commanding 6000 Senegalese and Armenians in Palestine, which had played a negligible role in defeating the Turkish armies ¹³.

¹¹ Fitzgerald, E.P. "France's middle eastern ambitions, the Sykes-Picot negotiations and the oil fields of Mosul 1915-1918", in *Journal of Modern History* 66, Dec.1994. Harvard University, Cambridge, M.A.

¹² Andrew, C.M. "France, Britain and the Peace settlement; a reconsideration", in Dann, U. 1988.

¹³ Andrew, 1988.

- The second factor was the 1917 Russian revolution. Post-revolutionary civil war in Russia had removed the perceived Russian threat, on which Britain's desire to see a French "buffer" presence in Syria had rested during the 1915/16 negotiations.

- The third, dominant factor was the increased importance, to Britain and France, (as well, as we shall see later, to the United States), of oil supplies. Both Britain and France had suffered oil shortages in the closing year of war and both were planning for post-war oil regulation. Representatives had thus begun to conduct bilateral discussions on oil policy in 1918. In 1920 these culminated in a comprehensive agreement over post-war oil interests in Mesopotamia and elsewhere. It was this agreement which officially confirmed France's participation in the post-war development of Iraqi oil.

In large part due to rivalry and confusion *within* the British government, the negotiation of the Anglo-French oil accords were exceedingly convoluted. This was partly because of disagreements over the status and priority to be given to the oil talks relative to the broader negotiations over the scope and nature of France and Britain's territorial claims in the Middle East. These were being discussed simultaneously within the framework of the Paris peace conference. The British government's chief petroleum official, Walter Long, and his delegate John Cadman met on numerous occasions with Henri Bérenger in late 1918 and early 1919 with a view to drawing up an agreement concerning post-war petroleum developments. In March and April 1919 a comprehensive agreement was initialled. The primary motivation behind Britain's desire to accommodate French aspirations to gain a share in Middle Eastern oil was that associating France with the development of the oil-fields of the former Ottoman Empire was perceived as the the only way to avoid France allying with the United States against British oil interests. Despite resistance from both Lloyd George and the Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon in 1919, the bulk of British ministers, and the inter-ministerial Petroleum Executive, favoured a rapid agreement with France over oil interests. The feeling was that if France was not brought into an agreement concerning post-war oil development, she was likely to side with the Americans in rejecting the legitimacy of the TPC concession and force wider access to middle Eastern oil. Writing after the event, Lloyd George said that

the majority view within the British government was that it “should co-operate before the French secured American assistance, and before this country was forced by decisions at the (Paris) peace conference to adopt in self-defence, and practically under compulsion, the policy of co-operation to which it was now invited” ¹⁴.

Despite the oil accord initialled by Long and Bérenger in April 1919 Lloyd George, apparently in a pique of anger, unilaterally revoked the agreements two months later. This was ostensibly due to disagreements with Clemenceau over French claims in Syria. However, reservations that Royal Dutch Shell’s participation was not in Britain’s interest also appear to have influenced his decision ¹⁵. However, despite this setback, the agreement was revived in more or less its original form later in 1919, Lloyd George dropping his opposition. In April 1920 the British and French prime ministers (Lloyd George and the recently elected Millerand) signed a draft peace treaty with Turkey at San Remo. This had one general and two specific results relevant to this text:

- The treaty allocated the Ottomans’ former provinces in the Levant and Mesopotamia to France and Britain as mandatory powers.
- Participation in oil developments: a separate paragraph of the San Remo agreement covered oil interests in the former Ottoman provinces. This defined respective spheres of interest and co-operation in oil matters in Russia, Rumania (where there were also sequestered German oil interests) and Mesopotamia. Britain agreed to reserve 25% of Mesopotamian production for French interests. It was left up to the French government to decide whether their participation would take the form of a private or state-owned company.
- Transportation of oil: although oil had still to be found in commercial quantities in Mosul, it was clear that the most efficient export route would be via Mediterranean ports. Under the San Remo agreement France thus agreed to facilitate the construction of a pipeline to allow oil to be piped across Syria ¹⁶.

¹⁴ Shwardran B. *The Middle East, oil and the great powers*, J.Wiley, New York, 1973, p.200.

¹⁵ Kent, 1976, provides what remains the definitive version of the extraordinary degree of British confusion over the issue (pp137-157). This was due both inter-ministerial rivalry and the ongoing British attempts to take control of Shell. Kent’s analysis complements that of Nowell, 1994, who traces French oil and bank links with Shell.

¹⁶ Nowell, 1994, p131.

These two latter provisions provided the foundation of France's involvement in Iraqi oil; securing a stake in the TPC and triggering construction of pipeline across French controlled Syria. Ironically, the agreement also provided the right for a 20% Iraqi government participation in the TPC. This idea was later quietly dropped. However, the fact that the San Remo provision for national participation was never honoured was to be raised repeatedly in the arduous and often acrimonious negotiations between post-1958 Iraqi governments and the foreign companies controlling Iraq's oil (see chapter 3). In August 1920, four months after the San Remo agreement was signed, the legal validity of the TPC's concession in Mesopotamia was reaffirmed in the Treaty of Sèvres, which confirmed the rights of foreigners in the territories "detached from Turkey".

6 The disputed sovereignty of Mosul

The Turkish government accepted the treaty of Sèvres only under duress, notably because of the concessions given to the Greeks who were then occupying Smyrna, and the fact that France continued to press its claims to parts of Cilicia. These facts made the settlement unsustainable. The subsequent war between Turkey and Greece has three consequences of importance to this narrative. Firstly, Turkish victory prompted the repudiation of the terms of the treaty of Sèvres and a strengthening of Turkey's territorial position under the treaty of Lausanne in July 1923. Secondly, during the negotiation of the treaty of Lausanne, the dispute over the sovereignty and boundaries of Mosul – over which the TPC held their concession - assumed a major importance. Thirdly, it was during the negotiations over Mosul that Britain and France were compelled to take account of the aspirations of American oil interests in the region.

It will be recalled that under the Sykes-Picot agreement Mosul fell within the French sphere of influence. Mosul had been discussed between prime ministers Lloyd George and George Clemenceau in London in December 1918. Despite the concern of those in the Quai d'Orsay, notably via the numerous colonial *comités* mentioned

earlier, to promote France's interests in Syria, Clemenceau appeared little interested in colonial matters. To Lloyd George's apparent surprise, Clemenceau was so preoccupied by France's Rhineland border and the potential for French investments in Cilicia, he appeared happy to cede French rights to Mosul, seemingly relatively unconcerned by Britain's ambitions in the Middle East. The British prime minister later wrote that on Clemenceau asking him what he wanted from the French. "I instantly replied that I wanted Mosul attached to Iraq and Palestine from Dan to Beersheba under British control. Without any hesitation he agreed" ¹⁷. France's ambassador in London at the time, Paul Cambon suggested that Clemenceau abandoned the claim to Mosul in part for agreement by Britain to support French claims over Cilicia and Syria; "[the French government gave up] all pretensions over Mosul provided that the British government promises (...) its support in helping us to realise our just demands concerning Syria and Cilicia" ¹⁸.

There is a substantial literature on the motivations and implications of this decision, the bulk of which need not detain us. Much of the debate centres on the perceived conflict between the French colonial lobby's "success" in obtaining Mosul's attachment during the Sykes Picot and Clemenceau's willingness to abandon it. However, as already noted, given that the spheres of influence agreed by Sykes-Picot did not alter existing commercial interests in each other's spheres, a French administration would not have had control of the oil of Mosul, which would still have been produced by the TPC. Although this seems generally accepted, it neglects the potential impact of oil revenues upon a French controlled Syrian state. Confusion and subsequent debate over the issue was heightened by the fact that neither premier told his foreign ministry of the decision that France had ceded Mosul to Britain, until many months afterwards... By this time the bi-lateral oil negotiations were well advanced.

With British troops in *de-facto* control of Iraq from 1917 onward, in terms of day to day control Mosul had duly been incorporated into the new Iraqi state. However, in

¹⁷ Andrew, 1988, p.159.

¹⁸ Cambon quoted in Nowell, 1994, p.129.

the Lausanne negotiations Turkey contested Iraq's claim to Mosul, chiefly on the basis that the province's population was Turkish (although evidently in fact mostly Kurdish) and not Arab, and thus should be included within the Turkish state. This led to protracted negotiations which were only fully resolved in 1925. At Lausanne Britain and Turkey agreed to undertake bi-lateral negotiations on the issue for a year, and if they failed to agree, to refer the matter to the League of Nations. Deadlock persisted and in 1924 the League launched an enquiry, with the International Court of Justice finally upholding the British and Iraqi claim to the province in December 1925. This decision was accepted with reluctant resignation by the Turkish government. However, they then signed a comprehensive agreement on the frontier and other issues in June 1926. As partial compensation, the Turkish government agreed to accept 10% of the revenues paid by the TPC to the Iraqi government.

Parallel to the struggle over Mosul's sovereignty, the British were preoccupied at the time with establishing a pliant but economically sound government in Iraq. Following the Cairo conference King Faisal was duly installed as monarch in Baghdad and a treaty of alliance was signed in October 1922. Notwithstanding considerable constitutional confusion, and the ongoing repression of internal revolts by the British ¹⁹, the Iraqi government signed a 75-year concession with the TPC on 24 March 1925. This covered the whole of Iraq and the southern province of Basrah, as well as a strip of land transferred from Iran in 1913. Following the definitive award of Mosul to Iraq by the League in January 1926 Britain signed a revised treaty with the Iraq government. With Iraqi sovereignty finally assured over Mosul, and the concession awarded to the TPC, the way appeared open for the partners within the TPC to proceed with exploration and production. However, two problems remained. Firstly France had to clarify what form its participation in the TPC would take. Secondly the interests of US oil companies which had been effectively frozen out of the Middle East by the 1920 San Remo agreement, now needed to be accommodated.

¹⁹ Bearing in mind the late 20th century history of Iraq, it should be remembered that the British RAF pioneered the use of aerial bombardment of civilians over Iraq and East Africa in the 1920s and 1930s.

7 The creation of the *Compagnie Française des Pétroles*

The Compagnie Française des Pétroles was formally constituted at the inaugural meeting of its founding shareholders on 28 March 1924²⁰. This was full four years after the San Remo treaty had accepted the principle – negotiated between French and British officials in 1918/1919 - that France should take control of Deutsche Bank's sequestered shares in the Turkish Petroleum Company. Yet it was to be another four years *after* the CFP's formation in 1924 that the French and their partners within the TPC would come to an agreement about how the TPC would actually operate in Iraq. The TPC signed an initial oil accord with the Iraqi government in 1925, and oil was discovered in commercial quantities two years later in 1927. Yet it was not until 1928 that partners in TPC drew up the so-called "Group Agreement" which defined the modalities of how the companies who made up the group would actually operate in Iraq. As well as defining the modalities of the companies operation in Iraq, this agreement also limited competition between the TPC partners elsewhere in the Middle East.

The main reasons for the long delay in both clarifying the form that France's stake in Iraqi oil would take and the slowness in negotiating an operating agreement amongst the partners within the TPC, both relate to rivalries within the oil industry. In the French domestic market, competition was most acute among the large number of local distribution companies and subsidiaries of the major foreign companies, particularly those of Shell and Standard Oil. All were concerned about the impact that the creation of a new "national" oil company would have upon their position in the French oil market. Evidently fears were heightened by the fact the company was being formed primarily to supply Iraqi oil to the French market at the request of the state which was liable to discriminate against non-French companies. These fears were allayed by the two founding characteristics of the CFP. Firstly inter-firm rivalry was resolved by a compromise which gave all significant existing oil interests in France shares in the new CFP. Secondly, although the CFP was created at the

²⁰ Catta, E. Victor de Metz; de la CFP au group TOTAL, TOTAL editions presse, Paris, 1990, p.3.

request of the government, the state itself initially took no share in the company's capital. Clearly this is somewhat problematic for those who see in the CFP simply a manifestation of the French state. This becomes important as CFP does come to be equated with French interests in general in the 1950s and 60s, and yet then finds itself in head to head competition with its state-owned rival ERAP/Elf, see chapter 3, section 7.

Internationally, the primary concern of the partners in the TPC during the 1920s was to regulate the impact of the arrival of Iraqi oil on the international market in such a way that it would not damage their interests elsewhere. In this, *from its inception*, French and the CFP's interest was rather different to its "Anglo-Saxon" partners; Anglo-Persian, Shell and the Standard Oil affiliates. The CFP was established because the French government saw participation in the TPC as being a way of securing supplies of crude oil. The CFP's share of Iraqi oil would provide a reservoir of "French" oil production, reducing France's dependency upon foreign-owned oil sources. In this regard, the CFP had a different set of priorities to its larger partners who were already global actors aiming to maximise profits from their international activities. Different priorities and strategies amongst the participants in the TPC, and the tensions which resulted from these, would persist into the 1970s. As such, as will be seen in later chapters, this specificity of the French stake in the TPC/IPC becomes one of the abiding themes of French negotiations with both the Iraqi authorities, and France's western partners, during the sixties and seventies.

The actual formation of the CFP was a hasty, muddled compromise. This was due both to the rivalry between various oil and banking interests with stakes in the future of oil in France, and the extremely volatile domestic political climate of the 1920s. Acting on the understanding established in the April 1920 San Remo accords, in July 1922 Britain, as the custodian of the sequestered German shares in the TPC, officially requested the government of Raymond Poincare to decide in what form France would take its shares in the TPC. Evidently the shares had to be transferred to a legal commercial entity. It was for the government to designate or create a private, mixed or state owned company for this purpose.

It will be recalled that the idea that France take the sequestered German shares in the TPC originated with Gulbenkian and Béranger, who favoured simply transferring the share to Shell's subsidiary in France. By 1921 Shell's predominance in the French market, and favoured status in the eyes of French politicians, had been eroded by competition from the US-owned Standard Oil companies. Poincare favoured the formation of a new, nationally owned private company. In September 1923 he asked Ernest Mercier to supervise the founding of the company. Mercier was a bright technocrat with experience in banking, electricity and oil sectors, notably as head of France's leading oil interest in Rumania. Poincare explicitly laid out Mercier's terms of reference in a letter dated 20 September 1923 ²¹. In this Poincare states the government's desire to create "a policy instrument capable of carrying out a national oil policy" via a private company in which "the ensemble of the principal French companies in the oil industry" be represented. Whilst accepting that this would include foreign-owned subsidiaries active in France, Poincare specified that the CFP's statutes should ensure that "permanent control of the company will be effected by French capital", adding the proviso that two government commissioners would oversee the companies activities regardless of ownership structure.

This letter has been widely interpreted as being the foundation of a state-driven oil policy, providing a blue-print for similar *dirigiste* developments in both Fourth and Fifth Republic administrations after 1945. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the state and CFP/TOTAL did work in very close tandem in the Middle East. In so doing they provided a model of state-commercial co-operation which would later be applied in the Middle East and elsewhere in defence, nuclear and armaments industries. However, a close reading of the available literature suggests it is a mistake to see the CFP at its inception as having been primarily the creation of the state designed to advance some abstract "national" interest in the oil industry. This was not the case for two reasons. Firstly Poincare and Mercier were clear that if the company was to be viable, it would have to accommodate and reconcile the key

²¹ Kuisel R.F. Ernest Mercier, French technocrat, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1967, p.31. Nowell, 1994, pp.171-172.

private oil interests in France. These included the subsidiaries of foreign oil companies, in particular those of Standard Oil. Secondly both men were exceedingly wary of domestic, left-wing political lobbies, who were increasingly advocating comprehensive state regulation of key industries.

It was this latter fear, of a domestic left intent on regulation or outright nationalisation of oil interests, which in large part explains not only the ownership structure of the CFP – a private joint-stock company – but also the haste with which the CFP was formed. Between October 1923 and March 1924 Mercier worked hard to bring together a joint-stock company which would, as Poincare had specified, bring together all the existing oil interests in France. The Company's founding capital of FFr24.1m (old francs) was thus partitioned between a large number of independent French companies and the subsidiaries of foreign oil companies active in France, and a series of banks who were allied to various of the oil interests.

The repartition of the shares is best viewed as a compromise to put together a group which would involve all of existing interests, none of which would be dominant, thus allowing the directors a degree of autonomy. In this regard it is significant that banking and oil groups linked to the US oil giant Standard Oil in fact took the largest block of shares in the company. This was a recognition of the limits of French power, and the feeling that if French interests were sufficiently allied with those of the US oil companies, they were more likely to get their way within the TPC. As Mercier's biographer succinctly states, the CFP "stumbled into this policy because of its own timidity, haste and financial weakness and because of determined resistance of private industry to any government control"²².

The belated yet hasty creation of the CFP was due to Poincare's precarious political position. In the spring of 1924 his government was swept from power and replaced with the unsteady radical coalition known as the *Cartel des Gauches*. This administration was in principle intent on greater regulation of the oil industry, which it feared was dominated by foreign capital. However, the coalition was itself weak

²² Kuisel, 1967, p.34.

and proved short-lived. The new regulatory body it created, the *Office national des liquides combustibles* (ONCL) had no direct stake in the CFP and could do little but oversee the existing regulated markets between the French companies and importers. By creating the CFP as a purely private entity, oil policy was effectively in the hands of Mercier and the leaders of the larger independent companies represented on the board of the newly founded CFP. The state had little direct impact upon oil policy, either at home or in the CFP's negotiations with its partners in the TPC.

Only in 1928 was there a strenuous effort by the state to question the role of the CFP and the government's relationship with it, in the form of a new law to re-distribute domestic oil market shares. This exacerbated the tensions between the various interests represented on the CFP board. At this point Mercier felt he was unable to continue and offered his resignation to Poincare, by now back in power at the head of a "National Union" government. His resignation was refused and the crisis defused by allowing the company to increase its capital via the state taking a 25% share. This was agreed in a new agreement between the CFP and the government, which was ratified in March 1929, effectively increasing its total capital by a quarter. In exchange the private shareholders were allowed significant tax breaks on profits arising from the operation of the TPC. In March 1931 the state's holdings were further increased, to 35% via a similar move. The state thus held a third share and had two representatives on the board.

The crises of 1928-31 were resolved in such a way that the company was able to consolidate its capital and its relationship with partners in the TPC. It also promptly moved towards becoming a more integrated oil company by creating its own refining subsidiary, the *Compagnie française de raffinage* (CFR), and a tanker fleet. The CFP had a controlling (55%) stake in the CFR, with the other oil companies (themselves shareholders in the CFP) owning the remaining shares in the refining operation..

8 The 1928 group agreement and pipelines

During these formative years, Ernest Mericer and the other directors of the CFP faced two separate challenges. The first, outlined above, was to establish the company as a viable commercial entity within the French market. The primary obstacle to achieving this was the contradictory pressures of the company's heterogeneous shareholders and the contradictory stances of successive French governments. The second challenge was to formulate and advance the CFP's specific interests *vis-à-vis* the other partners *within* the TPC, in the ongoing negotiations on how the company would operate. This evolved within two separate spheres; on the one hand the debate between the partners who made up the TPC, and on the other negotiations with the government of Iraq as to what form, and on what terms, the TPC would explore for and lift oil from Iraq. These debates over the internal composition and operational modalities of the TPC were only to be finally resolved in 1928.

As indicated above, an initial agreement between the TPC and the Iraqi government was signed in March 1925. At this point evidently oil exploration had not begun in Iraq. The structure of the TPC was that which had been agreed after the war; APOC held half the shares, the remainder were split between Shell and the CFP, with Gulbenkian holding 5%. The 1925 agreement provided the TPC with 24 defined plots in which to look for oil. Notionally other plots could be auctioned off to other firms, although this was little more than a paper device whilst the modalities of American participation in the development of Iraqi oil were resolved. Meanwhile exploration work began around Kirkuk in the Mosul concession awarded under the 1925 agreement.

Whilst the principle admitting the participation of American capital in the TPC had been conceded by Britain and France by the time of the Lausanne conference of 1923, the precise form that this participation would take remained unresolved. The background to the entry of US companies into the TPC will now be briefly reviewed. In 1920, largely at the bidding of companies related to US oil group Standard Oil, the

US state department had made various representations to the British authorities about the provisions of the San Remo accords ²³. In particular Americans complained that bi-lateral agreements on the exploitation of Mesopotamian oil was on contravention of the much vaunted “open door” economic policy endorsed by the allied powers during the Paris peace conference ²⁴. In 1920, Britain felt able to dismiss US concerns on the basis that the US already controlled the worlds largest oil reserves. In supporting the TPC concession in Mesopotamia the British maintained that they were merely upholding an existing, binding pre-war contract. Nevertheless, Standard Oil regarded the San Remo agreement as a blatant attempt to exclude them from Middle Eastern oil, and thus weaken their global position. To allow the TPC to develop oil in Mesopotamia was seen in direct contradiction of the “open door” commercial policy proposed by Wilson at the Paris Peace conference and endorsed by Britain and France. From 1920 onwards, US interests lobbied strenuously to either be included within the TPC, or failing that, to at least be allowed to explore for oil in Iraq on an equal footing to the European investors.

Although US claims were rebuffed in 1920, by the end of the Turko-Greek war in 1922, it had become clear to both France and Britain that without US diplomatic backing, their ability to consolidate their respective spheres of interests and mandates in the Middle East would be jeopardised. The support of the US for the Lausanne Treaty was thus a necessary step towards endorsing the validity of the TPC concession and ensuring that Mosul was incorporated into Iraq. The best way of ensuring US support being to bring American interests into the TPC.

Therefore, between 1920 and 1925 as the British government struggled to get Iraqi sovereignty over Mosul agreed, the TPC was largely preoccupied with how to incorporate American interests into the company. The position of the US government was complicated by the fact that there were rival concessionary

²³ In 1911 the original Standard Oil Company was broken-up under US anti-trust law. Two of the six companies subsequently formed Standard Oil of New Jersey (subsequently Exxon), and SO of New York (subsequently Mobil) who together came to dominate the US stake in Iraqi oil. In the following text they continue to be referred to collectively as “Standard Oil” as within the T/IPC they acted as one.

²⁴ Shwadran 1973, p.202.

companies eager to claim a stake in the petroleum of the region were the TPC concession to be revoked. The existing partners in the TPC therefore had two reasons for wanting the Americans inside the TPC. Firstly this would secure American backing for the legitimacy of the concession and the Anglo-French partition of the region. Secondly it would ensure that the TPC would not face American competition in the development of oil in Iraq. In fact, the original partners in the TPC had signed an agreement (known as a “mutual denial” clause) that they would not compete with each other for oil not just in Iraq, but throughout the Ottoman Empire. Thus Europeans were mindful that bringing the Americans into the TPC might be a way of heading-off potential US competition throughout the Middle East.

It was for this reason that the Americans were associated with the peace negotiations at Lausanne. As the US had not declared war against Turkey, they had only observer status at the negotiations, but nevertheless their presence was seen as essential by the British delegation, headed by Lord Curzon. For their part, the Americans were wary of being implicated politically in the region. They were conscious of the European powers’ manoeuvring, and promptly rebuffed the notion, clearly fanciful even at the time, never mind in retrospect, that they might be woven into the settlement via a mandate over Armenia. However, they were adamant that they should be allowed to participate economically in the territories of the former Ottoman Empire, basing their case on the principle of the “open door”²⁵. By the time of the Lausanne conference, the US administration had come around to the position of supporting the claims by a grouping of seven US oil companies, known collectively as the Near East Development Company to participate in the TPC. In 1923 the TPC’s decision to offer a 12% stake to the Americans was rejected. This was subsequently upped to 25%, which was accepted in principle by the end of 1925. Therefore when the agreement was finally signed between the TPC and the Iraqi government in 1925, the principle of American participation in the group was accepted. However, negotiations over the precise form this participation was to take continued off and on for a further three years before agreement was reached.

The catalyst for concluding the protracted and intermittent discussions between the existing partners in the TPC (Anglo-Persian, Shell and the CFP) and the American group was the discovery of a huge oil deposit at Baba Gurgur just north of Kirkuk on 27 June 1927. This find provided a clear impetus to formalising the revisions to the company's structure. These were finalised in an agreement in July 1928, apparently at a meeting in Ostend ²⁵. What subsequently became known as the "Group Agreement" defined two things: the internal structure of the IPC and the rules governing group-members activities elsewhere in the Middle East. Under the agreement, the ownership structure of the company was revised by Anglo-Persian ceding half of its 50% share to the Americans, grouped together as the Near East Development Corporation (NEDC), although dominated by just two of the Standard Oil "sisters", SO of New Jersey and SO of New York. In exchange for ceding a stake to the Americans, APOC received a 10% share of operating profits. This left major four shareholders: Anglo-Persian, NEDC (Standard Oil), Shell and the CFP all holding quarter of the shares. However, Gulbenkian managed to retain his original 5% share, reducing the four majors' stakes to 23.75% a piece. This foreign ownership structure of Iraqi oil would persist until nationalisation in 1972.

As already noted, the original 1914 agreement between the partners who had formed the TPC on the eve of the First World War had contained a "mutual denial" clause. Under this partners agreed not to compete with each other over oil exploration and production elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire. The 1928 agreement contained a revised version of this mechanism designed to avoid competition between the partners of the TPC. Under what became known as the "Red Line Agreement" the partners within the TPC agreed not to compete with each other for oil concessions in much of the former Ottoman Empire, although selected territories, notably Kuwait, were excluded. After some disagreement over the precise extent of the Ottoman

²⁵ Stivers, W. *Supremacy and oil; Iraq, Turkey and the Anglo-American world order 1918-30*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London. 1982, p.150. This is a concise, lucid and engaging account of these events.

²⁶ Sampson, A. *The Seven Sisters*, Coronet, London. 1976, p.84

Empire, the exclusion zone was designated on a map in red, hence the title, apparently by Gulbenkian ²⁷.

Shortly after the 1928 Group Agreement between the oil majors governing the production of oil in Iraq, a far broader, but informal global market-sharing arrangement was drawn-up by the directors of Anglo-Persian, Shell and Standard New Jersey. This arrangement, subsequently became known as the Achnacarry accord, taking the name of the Scottish castle where it was agreed in September 1928. It established tacit rules governing the international oil marketing, This drew on some of the non-competitive, cartel-like aspects of the Iraq agreement, and was designed primarily to avoid “unnecessary” competition in the global distribution of oil between the world’s three largest companies.

Mercier and the CFP evidently were signatories of the July 1928 agreement, although they did not participate in the Achnacarry talks. Yet whilst the French were not part of the global agreement, they had played a significant role in the negotiations which led up to the agreement governing the TPC’s operation. The other three major partners all had important oil holdings elsewhere in the world. They had favoured the TPC being simply a holding company which would sell on oil produced in Iraq to existing distribution and refining operations and distribute profits according to shareholding. Such an arrangement was anathema to the French. As outlined earlier, the CFP’s entire *raison d’être* was to gain a secure source of crude oil for the French market. They thus argued vigorously that the TPC should be a company in its own right. The CFP insisted that the TPC’s shareholders should not simply draw profits from a global marketing operation, but should receive deliveries of Iraqi crude in proportion to their share in the company. The majors were reluctant to accept this point, which was further complicated by Gulbenkian’s stance. Unlike the others in the company, the CFP had no source of income other than that promised from Iraqi oil, and thus in June 1927 threatened its partners with legal action to resolve the deadlock. This threat, coincided with the discovery of the first significant oil reserves near Kirkuk and together acted as a catalyst for what became

²⁷ Sampson, 1976, p 84. Stivers, 1982, pp.128-131.

the group agreement. Following the group agreement the TPC officially changed its name to the Iraq Petroleum Company, IPC.

Now the Americans had been brought into the TPC, a second oil agreement was signed between the TPC and the Iraqi government in March 1931. This effectively closed the possibility of oil exploration in Iraq to other companies; the Americans having been brought in, the “open door” now swung firmly shut. Having agreed on what terms the TPC would operate, there remained the not inconsiderable problem of how to transport the oil from the Mosul fields to ports where it could be shipped to refineries. As already mentioned, the construction of pipelines to transport oil from northern Iraq to the Mediterranean had originally figured in the Anglo-French discussions over partition of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the first world war. French diplomats had accepted the principle that pipelines could be constructed via French controlled territories of Syria in exchange for a French stake in the TPC.

However the question of the exact route of the pipelines required was the subject of considerable dispute and delay amongst the partners in the TPC. Anxious to see oil exported, and thus generate revenue for the cash-strapped Iraqi government, the revised 1931 agreement with the IPC made it a definite obligation of the company to construct a pipeline. Tripoli in French controlled Syria and Haifa in British controlled Palestine were chosen as the two rival points of arrival for such a pipeline. Whilst APOC and Shell favoured the Haifa route, supported by both the British and Iraqi governments, the French desired a northern pipeline route which would terminate at Tripoli. Eventually a compromise agreement was reached whereby a line was constructed which divided at the Euphrates, with one branch running to Haifa, one to Tripoli. This was achieved only after deadlock was overcome by Standard Oil of New Jersey’s president Walter Teagle siding with the CFP in favour of having at least one line running through French controlled territory ²⁸. Once agreement was reached among the IPC partners in October 1930, construction proceeded smoothly and the pipelines were built between 1932-34.

²⁸ Fitzgerald, E.P. “Business diplomacy, Walter Teagle, Jersey Standard and the Anglo-French pipeline...”, *Business history Review* 67, Summer 1993, Harvard, pp.207-245.

9 Conclusion

This opening chapter has traced some of the deeper roots of France's involvement in the Iraqi oil industry. During and after the 1914-18 war, France was largely reliant upon imported oil, largely from Dutch, British and US companies. From 1916 onwards British and French officials were engaged in debates about how to divide and control the territories then under the control of the decaying Ottoman Empire. The potential of finding oil within these territories significantly influenced these debates. German shares in the Turkish Petroleum Company, formed in 1912 to explore for oil in the region under, had been sequestered by the British and the idea evolved that France could be brought into the region by granting her the German shares in TPC. This was achieved and the French authorities created a largely private company, the *Compagnie française des pétroles* in 1924 which thus gained a quarter stake in the Iraqi oil industry. Coupled with France's mandates over Syria and Lebanon, through which Iraqi oil was piped following the discovery of commercial reserves in Kirkuk in 1927, this stake in the IPC constituted France's primary interest in Iraq until the 1939-45 war. The following chapter will examine the legacy of France's eviction from the Levant and Syria in the 1940s, and attempts to revive French Arab policy in the region in the 1960s.

Chapter 2

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Emerging from Israeli and Algerian shadows: the foundations of Fifth Republic foreign policy in the Middle East 1956-1967

- 1 Introduction
- 2 France's precarious standing in the Mashreq following the Second World War
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Emerging from Israeli and Algerian shadows: the foundations of Fifth Republic foreign policy in the Middle East 1956-1967

Introduction

Chapter one identified the roots of France's relationship with Iraq; these were established in the form of a French stake in the Iraqi oil industry in the 1920s. Oil pumped from Iraq, piped across Syria and Lebanon, continued to be a key source of crude oil for France over the next forty years. The subsequent chapter, chapter three, will examine the way in which the stake of the *Compagnie Française des Pétroles* (CFP) in the Iraq Petroleum Company became both one of the pillars around which France's post-1945 domestic oil industry was constructed and a cornerstone of Franco-Iraqi relations. The CFP's presence in Iraq laid the foundations for a far closer commercial relationship with Iraq which was elaborated from the late sixties onwards. By the early seventies, Franco-Iraqi ties were part of a flourishing nexus of newly established commercial and diplomatic relationships between Gulf states and France, successfully challenging Anglo-American predominance in the region. These relationships epitomised what had become an unmistakably "Gaullist" foreign policy framework. Within this France presented itself as beholden to neither superpower and selectively supported non-aligned states, particularly those towards which France had good export prospects. In the Middle East this policy had been greatly enhanced by a cautiously critical stance towards Israel after 1967.

While such a pattern was well established by the mid-seventies, what is striking is the degree to which France's flourishing relationships with Iraq and other Arab states were created from exceedingly inauspicious beginnings, in a very short space of time. Therefore before the extent and nature of these policies can be evaluated, they need to be placed in a deeper historical context. This chapter examines this context by providing a broad, interpretative enquiry into the changes in France's Middle Eastern policies between 1956 and 1967. When the Fifth Republic was formed in 1958, France's formal relations with Arab states were almost non-existent, relations with all states except Lebanon having been severed following the Suez invasion of 1956.

The attack on Egypt was the culmination of a tacit alliance with Israel which had evolved rapidly from the early 1950s. Both Franco-Israeli relations and the ostracisation of France in an increasingly nationalist Arab world were partial by-products of the escalating war in Algeria. Both the genesis and early years of the Fifth Republic were dominated by this war. It was only *after* Algerian independence in 1962 that France's relations with the Arab world could emerge from the dense and overlapping shadows projected by the alliance with Israel and its war in Algeria.

This chapter is structured around six, broadly chronological, sections.

- The first examines France's standing in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Second World War, focusing on its ejection from Syria and Lebanon and the manner in which this exacerbated friction with Britain and the US in the region.

- The second section then looks at the rationale of France's arms sales to Israel in the early fifties and the manner in which a de-facto alliance between the two had emerged by 1956. The failure of the Suez venture and escalation of war in Algeria initially strengthened ties between the alliance, which extended into nuclear as well as military cooperation.

- The third section examines the situation inherited by de Gaulle and the Fifth Republic he formed in 1958. De Gaulle sought to reorder foreign policy priorities, including the downgrading and regularisation of ties with Israel and the official ending of nuclear cooperation.

- The fourth section looks at the manner in which France gradually re-established relations with Arab states following the end of the war in Algeria.

- Fifthly, this restoration of bilateral ties with Arab countries is then located within de Gaulle's revised foreign policy framework. From 1963 this explicitly promoted France as a champion of non-aligned, newly independent third world states; firstly towards Algeria – which remained central to the notion of a French Mediterranean policy - but swiftly to other Arab states such as Libya and Iraq.

- Sixthly and finally, the chapter looks at the manner in which this policy was fortuitously consolidated by de Gaulle's reactions to the six-day war of June 1967. Censure of Israel and suspension of arms sales precipitously bolstered

France's prestige in the Arab world. Coupled with prompt overtures to newly radicalised Arab governments, notably in Iraq and Libya, this stance provided French diplomats with a considerable store of goodwill and commercial leverage within the Arab world. By the mid-seventies, the deep Franco-Arab antagonism of the fifties had been replaced with empathy and praise for France from Arab states.

2. France's precarious standing in the Mashreq following the Second World War

This chapter's principal concern is the way in which French relations with the Arab states of the Middle East were eclipsed by the Franco-Israeli alliance from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties. However, the broader evolution of post-1945 Franco-Arab relations cannot be understood without reference to the defeat and withdrawal of the French from Syria and Lebanon. France's ignominious withdrawal from the Levant in 1945 bequeathed two longer-term considerations, both of which have had an impact upon subsequent French policy to the region. Firstly the events in the Levant during the war exacerbated long-standing Anglo-French rivalries in the Middle East. This rivalry was translated in the minds of post-war French elites into antagonism towards British and American policy in the region. Secondly it meant that following de Gaulle's departure from power in 1946, subsequent Fourth Republic governments were unfettered by ties to the Levant, and had no interest in constructive engagement with Arab nationalism.

Chapter one outlined how, in the wake of the break-up of the Ottoman empire and World War I, France acquired mandates over the newly defined states of Syria and Lebanon. French rule faced considerable nationalist opposition; only in 1936 was this partially assuaged with the initialling of a treaty, which emulated those signed by Britain with Egyptian and Iraqi leaderships. French control of Syria facilitated the construction of the IPC's pipelines from the oilfields of northern Iraq in the early 1930s, permitting the export of Iraqi petroleum and the consolidation of both the CFP and France's domestic oil refining industry. As a result of the outbreak of war in 1939 and the Franco-German armistice in June 1940 France's Levantine mandates fell under the control of the Vichy authorities. Britain's initial attitude to this was ambivalent. The allied command in Cairo and Palestine did not immediately attempt

to antagonise Vichy-ruled Syria and Lebanon, so long as axis powers were not allowed to encroach upon the Levant.

However, as the allied position in the region deteriorated, initial ambivalence evaporated. With substantial allied backing, Free French forces from Palestine defeated the Vichy authorities in Damascus and Beirut in June 1941. Jewish partisans participated in this campaign, creating personal bonds between Zionists and Free French which would later help nurture Franco-Israeli ties. Upon arriving triumphal in Beirut, the leader of the Free French corps, General Catroux declared France's mandate dissolved and that henceforth Syrians and Lebanese were "independent and sovereign peoples"¹. Yet it soon became clear that Free French conceptions of independence and sovereignty were extremely restricted. To the ire of nationalists who had initially welcomed his arrival, Catroux imposed puppet rulers upon both countries and viewed all manifestations of Arab nationalism as being largely of British inspiration². Conscious of the ground-swell of support for Axis powers amongst Arab nationalists, coupled with tension and exasperation over a range of issues between Allied leaders and de Gaulle, British and American forces pressurised the French to hold elections for more representative government in the Levant in 1943. Churchill stated that "there is no question of France maintaining the same position which she exercised in Syria before the war"³.

However, when in October 1943 these polls produced moderately nationalist governments, and the newly elected Lebanese president announced to popular acclaim that he was revoking the treaties with France, the French governor reacted by arresting him and his ministers. This incensed the British authorities who issue an ultimatum and the decision was revoked, marking a sharp escalation of tension between British and French authorities. The installation of the Free French authority thus highlighted the contradiction which dominated both Franco-Arab, and Franco-Allied relations between 1941-45. This was de Gaulle's deeply ambivalent attitude towards full independence for Syria and Lebanon. The Free French commander Catroux ostensibly modelled his rule on that accorded to Egypt and Iraq by the

¹ Sachar, H.M. *Europe leaves the Middle East 1936-54*, Allen Lane, London, 1974, p.282.

² For Catroux' role, and subsequent relations with the Fourth republic, see Lesner, H. Catroux, Albin Michel, Paris, 1990.

British, i.e. close relations of political patronage and defence ties between the former mandatory power and local rulers. In practice, this proved unworkable for three reasons: France's far weaker global standing; its desire for direct, centralised rule; and the increasingly cohesive nationalist demands in Damascus, then still very much the intellectual and political centre of the Arab world.

The situation was complicated by the fact that de Gaulle himself attached great importance to the Levant. This was both for personal reasons and the fact that until 1945, he drew his own legitimacy in large part from the rule of French colonies by Free French forces. De Gaulle had also served in Lebanon in the 1930s. His book on the French army, which first brought him to prominence at home, draws on his military experience in Lebanon. Thus it was for both personal and political reasons that in August 1942 de Gaulle spent a month in the Levant, to the great irritation of allied leaders. While there he became convinced that Britain's principal aim was to replace French influence in the Middle East, hardening his conviction that all Arab nationalist agitation simply reflected British manipulation. At the time this fixation soured relations with Britain in general and Churchill in particular. It also strengthened the foundations of the belief shared by de Gaulle and many others in the Fifth Republic that France's "natural" enemy in the Middle East was perfidious Britain and the US, usually referred to nebulously as Anglo-Saxons.

Faced with increased nationalist dissent in Beirut and Damascus in April 1945 de Gaulle dispatched additional troops to the Levant, against the advice of London. By May 1945 agreements brokered two years earlier to gradually scale down the French presence in Syria completely broke down, prompting widespread urban violence. French troops made a clumsy attempt to reassert their presence, triggering an acute crisis between de Gaulle's administration and the British. Allied troops in Syria intervened to separate the forces and restore order while de Gaulle fulminated against Churchill, virtually threatening the newly installed British ambassador in Paris with war. However, faced with a military *fait accompli*, de Gaulle had no practical option other than to withdraw his forces and negotiated a total withdrawal from Syria by the end of the year.

³ Sachar, 1974, p.287.

Although generally viewed as the most volatile chapter in Anglo-French relations during the war, in fact De Gaulle's spat with Churchill over Syria had little practical, immediate lasting impact. By the end of 1946 both men were out of office. The quick succession of governments which would characterise post-war Fourth Republic government little concerned with Levant, the focus of Mediterranean policy shifting to the Maghreb. By 1946 Syria and Lebanon were full members of the United Nations; independent Syria, backed by the Soviet Union, hastened the full withdrawal of all foreign forces from its soil. For France the ignominious ejection from the Levant was a foretaste of the forces of nationalism and decolonisation which would first preoccupy and then, twelve years later, destroy France's Fourth Republic

3 Relations with Israel during the Fourth Republic 1948-58

Franco-Israeli relations are the exception to the general observation made in the introduction that little secondary literature exists on France's Middle Eastern policy. Indeed few topics associated with French foreign policy have generated such extensive or polemical commentary as the Israeli question. The intensity, scale and scope of this commentary stems from two, inter-linked sources. Firstly it is one of the few foreign policy issues with strong domestic resonance; both because of its implications for domestic attitudes to Judaism and the existence of powerful lobbies. The latter have been principally, but not exclusively, in favour of Zionism and strong Franco-Israeli ties. Secondly, debate has been heightened due to the apparently uneven and inconsistent nature of Franco-Israeli ties. As the following text explains, a very close relationship, particularly between the two countries' military establishments, flourished in the mid-fifties. This culminated in joint military action over Suez in 1956. Failure at Suez initially reinforced military ties and spawned cooperation on nuclear issues. Close links continued in the early years of France's Fifth Republic after 1958. Yet within ten years official bilateral relations were strained to breaking point. De Gaulle censured Israel over the June 1967 war, applying an arms embargo on the eve of hostilities in 1967. This embargo was reinforced in 1969. Indeed it was the sense of rupture in 1967 which triggered the

initial literature on the relationship ⁴. Although the change in De Gaulle's attitude towards Israel in 1967 was undoubtedly abrupt, the resulting polemical, highly-polarised literature has often served to exaggerate the nature of rupture. Subsequent scholarly writing has stressed that, notwithstanding the polemics, in practice France's relations with Israel were characterised by nuances and a basic continuity of relations between 1958 and 1967. Even in 1967, links between military elites were never totally broken and arms deliveries continued, often quasi-illicitly ⁵.

Given the principal focus of the text is Franco-Iraqi relations, the reader is well entitled to ask whether *an examination and understanding of Franco-Israeli relations in the fifties and sixties essential for the subsequent analysis of France's relations with Arab countries in general and Iraq in particular?* There are three reasons why this is the case:

- Firstly in terms of the analysis of foreign policy making in France, the shifting nature of the relationship with Israel under Fourth and Fifth Republic administrations is indicative of broader changes in foreign policy making in the pre- and post-1958 periods. Prior to 1958 Franco-Israeli relations epitomised the chaotic, personalised and unofficial nature of foreign policy formulation under the Fourth Republic. Having brought the Algerian war to an end in 1962, de Gaulle consolidated the framework of principles and practices which provided the foundations of Fifth Republic foreign policy making. Within this framework, relations with Israel were "normalised"; ties with Arab states re-established and the prerogatives of the Quai d'Orsay over foreign policy restored ⁶. However, as will be

⁴ This is notably the case amongst intellectuals and politicians conscious of the interrelationship between attitudes to Judaism in France and Israel, see Aron, R. De Gaulle, Israël et les Juifs, Plon, Paris, 1968. See also the more populist accounts such as Dan, U. L'Embargo, Eds Première, Paris, 1969. (v.A51b)

⁵ Crosbie, S.K., A tacit alliance; France and Israel, Princeton U.P. 1974. Kassir, S & Mardam-Bey, F. Itinéraires de Paris à Jerusalem (2 Vols), Institut des études palestiniennes, Washington, 1992. Vaisse, M. La Grandeur; politique étrangère du général de Gaulle 1958-1969, Fayard, Paris, 1998. Cohen, S. De Gaulle, les Gaullistes et Israël, A Moreau, Paris, 1974.

⁶ Within French literature the concept of "normalisation" of relations was promoted by Samy Cohen in his De Gaulle, les Gaullistes et Israël, A Moreau, Paris, 1974. Cohen suggests that de Gaulle's policy in the 60s can be characterised by the "double normalisation", Israel's privileged, personalised ties being brought back into the domain of regular diplomacy and diplomatic ties with Arab states re-established. This thesis has become influential, and is repeated in Vaisse. However, while this conception of "normalisation" is technically accurate in terms of diplomacy one of the aims of this chapter and thesis is to stress that from the mid-1960s, far from a simple restoration and regularisation of diplomatic ties with Arab states such as Iraq, there was a complete reinvention of Franco-Arab relations.

seen later, some characteristics of Franco-Israeli relations in the 1950s, notably the role of informal lobbies, channels and procedures of arms and aeronautical sales would return to characterise France's relationship with Arab states during the 1970s. This raises the question as to whether we can discern a pattern and continuity of such "parallel diplomacy" within the French state, a question and theme which will reoccur in later chapters

- Secondly, exports to Israel between the mid-fifties and mid-sixties, particularly by the aeronautical and nuclear industries, established a precedent of subsidising key domestic industrial sectors via exports. Aeronautical and armaments industries developed this precedent extensively in their dealings with Arab governments in the 1970s, to the benefit of their principal client, the French military. Indeed there is an uncanny symmetry between the ties established between French companies and Israel in the 1950s and 60s, and those with Iraq and other Arab states of Gulf in the 1970s ⁷.

- Thirdly, the apparently abrupt change in French official attitudes to Israel in 1967 had a decisive and long-standing impact upon Arab perceptions of French foreign policy. An undeniable by-product of de Gaulle's criticism of Israel in 1967 was the perception among many Arab leaders of a "pro-Arab" stance by France. This view was cultivated and reinforced in the years 1967-73 as France successfully sold a range of armaments to Arab governments, including Iraq, and refocused its energy policy towards oil supplies from the Middle East. This perception fuelled the notion of what I am terming the "reinvention of French Arab policy" from the late sixties onwards. To this day this notion is both implicitly and explicitly drawn upon to bolster France's ties in the Arab Middle East ⁸. This is particularly, but by no means exclusively, true of Gaullist politicians, indeed one of the key themes of latter chapters dealing with France's post-1981 relations with the Arab world is the high degree of continuity demonstrated under the presidency of François Mitterrand.

3.1 Franco-Israeli military co-operation 1949-58

⁷ Péan, P. *Les deux bombes*, Fayard, Paris 1991 (2nd ed.). See footnote 19, below.

⁸ See for example Jacques Chirac's speech in Cairo in April 1996: See "l'Orient compliqué de Jacques Chirac" *Le Monde*, 18.4.96; "L'impossible politique arabe de la France gaulliste", *Libération*, 16.4.96.

Ironically, given the close bilateral ties which were to develop during 1953-56. for the first five years following Israel's creation, French relations with Israel were unremarkable. Indeed France's formal recognition of the state in May 1949 came a year later than other major powers. Full diplomatic relations were established only in September 1952; relations being marred largely due to disagreements over the treatment of religious orders and sites within areas of Jerusalem under Israeli control. These initial problems reflected the vagaries of foreign policy process under France's Fourth Republic - something Israeli leaders would swiftly learn to turn to their advantage - rather than a general lack of support for Israel within France. France's domestic Jewish population of around half a million had been swollen by emigrés from central Europe and Germany during World War II. Their presence reinforced France's status as a centre of Zionism during the first half of the century. As Britain restricted Zionist activities in Palestine, several groups, including Ben Gurion's *Haganah* shifted their headquarters to Paris during 1945-46. There they drew logistical and political support from the pro-Zionist networks established between Jewish partisans active in the French resistance, both in France and in the anti-Vichy campaign in Syria, where they based their affinity on a joint mistrust of Britain and Arabs (see above) ⁹. Many of the French politicians instrumental in fostering Israeli-French ties, Gaullists and non-Gaullists alike, initially established links with Zionists during the resistance. Such links were important in channelling arms to Jewish groups in Palestine in 1946-48, notably from Corsica ¹⁰.

However, while bilateral trade and cultural ties did evolve during 1949-53, initially Franco-Israeli ties were only of very marginal importance to either country. This is usually attributed to the fact that Israel's foreign policy apparatus was orientated largely towards the English speaking world. The French foreign ministry was also wary of the impact of Israel's creation on their fragmentary Arab policy, which was still smarting from the loss of Syria and Lebanon and under increasing pressure from Arab nationalists in the Maghreb. Yet in the early 1950s three factors were to rapidly and dramatically alter the nature of Israeli-French links. Firstly Israel sought to significantly increase its arms purchases from abroad. Secondly, Israeli emissaries

⁹ Cohen, 1974, p.28-31.

¹⁰ Crosbie, 1974, p.30. Kagan, B. *Combat Secret pour l'Israël*, Hachette, Paris 1963, pp.75, 204.

sent to France to buy arms found willing partners as France's newly revived, post-war arms and aircraft industries were anxious to secure export orders. Only via exports were they likely to obtain economies of scale and thus finance the domestic research and development needed to rebuild France's national military capabilities¹¹. Thirdly, the existing personal ties between individuals in Israeli and French military hierarchies forged during the war, referred to above, were formalised and strengthened by the fact that military and political elites in both countries began to perceive a common enemy in Arab nationalism and communism.

From 1953 onwards it was this convergence of foreign policy perspectives, due essentially to this encroachment of the cold war upon the Middle East, and more assertive Algerian nationalism in the Maghreb, which wove together the otherwise disparate threads of French and Israeli policy. Temporarily, this created a unique form of close relationship between the two countries; the product of close personal relations which, in the confused environment of Fourth Republic politics, allowed foreign policy decisions to by-pass formal channels of policy making. This was particularly true of the Quai d'Orsay, which was generally perceived by Israelis and their French supporters as being hostile to closer Franco-Israeli ties. Formally French arms sales to Israel and neighbouring states were subject to approval by Britain and the US under the Tripartite Declaration, signed by the three powers on May 20 1950. This aimed to limit the flow of arms to the Middle East in a "balanced" manner. It was used, particularly by the Quai d'Orsay to constrain initial French attempts to supply Israel with arms and aeroplanes.

From early 1950 Israel had begun to seek new suppliers of military equipment. As early as March 1950, Israeli's military attaché in Paris, Benjamin Kagan had approached the French ministry of Defence and Nord Aviation (a precursor of Dassault) with a view to purchasing Ouragan fighter-bomber planes. However this was vetoed by the Quai d'Orsay as contravening the Tripartite Declaration. In mid-1952 a similar deal concerning Ouragan and Nord-2 transport planes was initialled but again blocked by the Quai, although Kagan was able to obtain some reconditioned Mosquito planes which France had originally purchased from Britain,

¹¹ Kolodziej, E.A. Making and marketing arms; the French experience and its implications for

and limited supplies of small arms ¹². Although the French foreign ministry was merely respecting its obligations under the 1950 Declaration, its vetoing of these early sales to Israel was decisive in bolstering the subsequent perception of those who favoured of closer relations with Israel, that the Quai d'Orsay was an obstacle to closer Franco-Israeli ties.

1953 marked a turning point in relations between France and Israel. In April a new French ambassador was appointed to Tel Aviv. Pierre Gilbert proved far more dynamic than his predecessor both in exploiting the potential for French military exports to Israel and at overcoming, or by-passing, official reluctance in some quarters in Paris to authorise such exports. Britain had supplied armaments to Israel in the first five years of its existence. However, it had done so largely in line with the Tripartite Declaration; supplying Israel primarily the same weapons as those supplied to neighbouring countries, notably Jordan, with whom London had a defence pact. In the event of conflict with Jordan, Israel thus felt it was unlikely to be able count on Britain for supplies. New French ambassador Gilbert therefore found a willing commercial partner in Israel's Ministry of Defence, which was eager to diversify its suppliers. Shimon Peres, then director-general at the ministry, rapidly became the chief architect of the Franco-Israeli military entente. Peres built on the initial approaches made by Kagan by undertaking intense, extremely effective parallel diplomacy in Paris. In the face of official French reticence – notably in the Quai d'Orsay - to supply arms outside of the framework of the Tripartite Declaration, Peres and his assistants established an extensive network of contacts and sympathisers within the French military establishment. Backed by Israel's ambassador in France, Jacob Tsur, Peres' initiative was successful because of the sympathies of key French personnel towards Israel and desires of French arms and aviation manufacturers, to secure export orders. Despite some resistance from the Quai d'Orsay, smaller contracts, for light arms and AMX-13 tanks were agreed in 1953 and scheduled for delivery the following year. By mid-1954 French positions shifted further in favour of supplying weapons to Israel; the delivery of the AMX-13 tanks, as well as that of Ouragan planes which had been blocked two year's previously, were permitted. In August 1954 General Dayan visited France,

the international system, Princeton U.P., New Jersey, 1987, especially pp.32-53.

consolidating ties with French generals, including chief of staff general Koenig. In the wake of this visit, the sale of Mystère II and IV planes as well as American Sherman tanks (sold to France by Britain after 1945) were agreed.

This relationship continued to flourish during the course of 1955 and was reinforced by changes in both Israeli and French domestic politics. Ben Gurion obtained the defence portfolio in February and became premier at the end of 1955. Foreign Minister's Sharret's replacement with Golda Meir hardened Israel's stance vis-à-vis its Arab neighbours and fuelled both Israeli and neighbouring Arab states' drive to buy arms. Within Israel, these changes strengthened the hand of Shimon Peres, who was close to Ben Gurion. He made numerous trips to France with a series of arms orders during 1955. The efforts of Peres and his representative in Paris, Yossef Nahmias, were further enhanced by the election in France in early 1955 of the government of Edgar Faure. Faure and his advisors were favourable to aiding Israel militarily and provided Peres with unprecedented access to key officials; Peres even having his own office within the prime minister's office for a time¹³. These officials included minister of interior Maurice Bourgès-Maunory who, with his principal aid Abel Thomas, were central to the development of Franco-Israeli relations in 1955-58. Such high-level contacts rapidly translated into accelerated arms sales and deliveries; by late 1955 France had become the principal supplier to Israel's airforce. Conversely, Israel had, in the space of three years, become a key client for French aeronautical industry, particularly Dassault. These flourishing commercial ties were based on close personal links and empathy between military elites, which largely by-passed official diplomatic channels.

Although Faure's administration fell in November 1955 the composition of the subsequent government, headed by the socialist Guy Mollet further entrenched the Israeli's favoured position within the administration. Not only was Mollet a firm supporter of Israel, but Bourgès-Maunory became defence minister and Mollet chose as foreign minister Christian Pineau. Pineau's pro-Israeli stance was greatly resented by officials in the Quai d'Orsay, and led to bitter relations with his staff, who were

¹² Kagan, 1963, p.218. Kassir, 1992, pp.129-131.

¹³ Kassir, 1992, 161-162.

kept almost totally in the dark about the extent of Franco-Israeli ties leading up to Suez ¹⁴.

3.2 The rupture of Suez, 1956

During 1956 the nature of the Franco-Israeli relationship changed dramatically. The roles of France and Israel in the invasion of Suez have been amply documented and there is neither need nor space here to enter into the details of the political planning or military aspects of the actions of October/November 1956 ¹⁵. However, it is important to briefly examine the motivations which transformed Franco-Israeli ties from being primarily about arms supplies to the planning and execution of joint military action against Egypt, in collusion with Britain, after Nasser's decision to nationalise the Suez canal in July 1956.

Three sets of factors seem relevant:

- Firstly within the Middle East, both Israel and France shared a suspicion towards the then dominant US and British approaches to Middle Eastern "security" based on overarching military pacts. In the Baghdad Pact, which by November 1955 regrouped Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan with Britain, France perceived an extension of the US and British hegemony established in the Middle East when they were ejected from the Levant a decade earlier. Israel made its opposition to the Pact known publicly in January 1955. This was noted by Israel's ambassador in Paris as being a factor in the alignment of the two country's positions in the region ¹⁶.

- Secondly, and rather more importantly, was the two countries' mutual suspicion of and opposition to Egypt itself. Not only had Egypt under Nasser become the vanguard of Arab Nationalism and the Arab world's leading critic of Israel, but, more importantly for the French, Nasser was widely perceived by French

¹⁴ Pineau subsequently claimed that foreign ministry officials' pro-Arab, antisemitic (sic) views biased their approach to Israel. Pineau, C. 1956 Suez, R Laffont, Paris 1976, pp.66-68.

¹⁵ In addition to Pineau's piecemeal account, Abel Thomas wrote *Comment Israël fut sauvé*, Albin Michel, Paris 1978. See also Vaisse, M "France and the Suez crisis" in Louis, Wm.R, and Owen, R. Suez 1956, Clarendon, Oxford 1989, pp131, 335. Vaisse, M. (ed) *La France et l'Operation de Suez*, Addim, Paris 1997. Bar-Zohar, M. Suez: Ultra-secret, Paris, 1964

¹⁶ Kassir, 1992, p.135. Kassir points out that an alternative strategy, of France backing Syrian and Egyptian hostility to the Baghdad Pact, was not considered.

decision makers and public as the principal power behind the nationalist movement fighting in Algeria since 1954. Just as de Gaulle had been blind to the indigenous roots of Arab nationalism in the Levant in the mid-40s, blaming opposition entirely on the British, so in the mid-50s Fourth Republic politicians and military planners appeared convinced that the “resolution” of the Algerian “problem” could be obtained if Nasser’s power could be curtailed.

- Thirdly, specific French concerns over Egypt’s influence over Nasser shade into the broader, global context of French strategic thinking in 1956. Arab nationalism was seen as just one manifestation of anti-colonial nationalism which was in the process of inflicting a series of humiliating defeats on France’s overstretched and beleaguered forces throughout the empire. This was particularly the case in Indochina (above all the ignominious ejection of France following the defeat of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954) and the Maghreb, where in early 1956 both Morocco and Tunisia had regained their independence. Within both the United Nations and among the “non-aligned” countries, who first met in Bandung in 1955, France was universally condemned for its continuing war in Algeria.

All three of these factors were important in shaping French actions in 1956. In this context Nasser’s nationalisation of the Suez canal company – founded by a Frenchman and in which many small French investors still had shares – in July was seen as a humiliation too far. It led to preparations which culminated in invasion of late October. Planning of the Suez operation was very much facilitated by, indeed was the culmination of the previous three years ever-closer personal collaboration between Israeli and French military and political elites.

Perhaps ironically, the near-total failure of the operation from a political and diplomatic point of view did not dampen official French attitudes to, or the relationship with, Israel. Indeed most Fourth Republic politicians felt simultaneously embittered and vindicated by what they saw as US duplicity over the affair. The enhanced sense of diplomatic isolation, and the relative logistical and military success of the operation in fact prompted even closer military Franco-Israeli ties during 1956-58, and the acceleration of nuclear cooperation

3.3 Nuclear cooperation

From late 1956 until the fall of the Fourth Republic in May 1958, Franco-Israeli ties were the closest they ever came to being a formal alliance. Relations continued as they had begun, evolving in an informal, personalised and often clandestine manner during the chaotic, closing 18 months of the Fourth Republic. Domestic political confusion in France aided those individuals, notably in the defence and interior ministries, who were keen to promote closer, post-Suez relations with Israel. This factor underpins Crosbie's convincing argument that domestic political changes in both Israel and France need to be viewed in conjunction with the changing foreign policy objectives of each state in order to explain the rapidly fluctuating fortunes of the "tacit alliance"¹⁷. As outlined above, at the core of the relationship was the supply of French arms and aviation to Israel. These supplies reinforced closer military cooperation, which rested primarily on shared ideological and strategic objectives in the face of Arab nationalism, buttressed by personal sympathies for Israel among some key French military and political figures. Given the prevailing secrecy surrounding nuclear issues, it is only in retrospect that the degree to which Franco-Israeli relations during this period had a nuclear dimension has been appreciated. Bilateral links over nuclear research fostered from 1953 intensified in the immediate aftermath of Suez and continued well into the first decade of the Fifth Republic. The timing of nuclear scientific co-operation, the cornerstone of which was France's construction of a nuclear reactor for Israel at Dimona, was critical for both states. For the French, the decision to develop a military nuclear capability, and to cooperate with Israel over nuclear matters were taken almost simultaneously in 1956. Four years later France exploded her first nuclear device, in Algeria in February 1960. For Israel, French technical assistance in this period was critical, although the precise scale and scope of this cooperation was obscured by the deliberate ambiguity surrounding Israel's nuclear weapons developments well into the 1980s¹⁸.

¹⁷ For all the subsequent coverage in France Crosbie, 1974 remains the most succinct and diligent study of Franco-Israeli ties.

¹⁸ Hersh, S.M. *The Sampson option*, Israel's nuclear arsenal and American foreign policy, Random House, New York, 1991. Jabber, F. *Israel and nuclear weapons*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1971.

A brief review of nuclear ties with Israel is important at this juncture for two reasons. Firstly, notwithstanding De Gaulle's explicit commitment to continued good relations with Israel, suspending cooperation on nuclear weaponry became essential for Fifth Republic foreign policy. The extensive inter-penetration of Israeli and French scientific and defence communities during the late fifties compromised De Gaulle's determination to formulate an independent French foreign policy. In addition, by late 1960 such ties and nuclear cooperation also threatened to further undermine relations with the United States, who had been kept in the dark about Israel's nuclear ambitions and were anxious to prevent proliferation. Yet while De Gaulle's desire to curtail nuclear ties with Israel was clear *in principle* from 1958, *in practice* it was only belatedly and partially implemented. This inconsistency reflected serious divisions within his entourage about attitudes to Israel, rather than duplicity on the part of the president.

Secondly, the supply to Israel of a French designed and built nuclear reactor is important as the first chapter of a broader history of French nuclear cooperation in general, and ties with Iraq in particular. Just as the global export successes of France's aeronautical industry to the Arab world in 1970 can be traced back to Israeli exports in the fifties, so nuclear cooperation with Israel provided the model for subsequent French exports of nuclear technology and reactors to several countries. Twenty years after having agreed to aid Israel in civilian and military atomic research, in 1976 France would consolidate its burgeoning programme of military and civilian co-operation with Iraq with the sale of a nuclear reactor. The Franco-Iraqi relationship thus again uncannily came to mirror the earlier bi-lateral ties with Israel. The parallels between the two were further contorted by Israel's destruction of the Iraqi reactor in June 1981. Coming just weeks after Mitterrand's election to the presidency, this was a critical juncture for post-May 1981 foreign policy in the region. Finally, although separated by two decades, France's history of nuclear cooperation with first Israel and then Iraq have become inextricably intertwined by the manner in which revelations about the parallel relationship were revealed ¹⁹.

¹⁹ Péan, P. *Les deux bombes*, Fayard, Paris, 1991. First published in 1981, this book is important but paradoxical. While marred by hasty, and often sensational writing, its importance rests on the information revealed, the chief source is almost certainly Pierre Guillaumat, who had cooperated with Péan on his 1982 book on the oil industry. Hersh plausibly suggests that the timing

The background to Franco-Israeli nuclear cooperation is now well established. Israel began limited nuclear research with scientists in the US from 1948 onwards. In 1949 Ben Gurion suggested co-operation with France and limited scientific contacts began that year ²⁰. Yet in keeping with the general evolution of Franco-Israeli ties, nuclear cooperation did not begin in earnest until 1953, when France purchased a patent for uranium extraction developed in Israel. This purchase, and a subsequent 1955 heavy water processing deal helped cement ties between the two countries' scientific communities. Formal exchanges between the France's *Commissariat B l'énergie atomique* (CEA) and its Israeli counterpart occurred from 1954. This cooperation, which initially did not have an explicit military component, was publicised by the French at the UN in November 1954.

Suez, whilst a set-back for both Israeli and French foreign policies, triggered even closer conventional military cooperation and was decisive in prompting each to develop a programme of nuclear weapons development. Whilst each reached this decision separately, during 1957 there was considerable overlap between research programmes. During 1957, Guy Mollet's (Socialist) government dropped its initial hostility to the idea of France becoming a nuclear power. A protocol outlining France's atomic defence programme was signed on November 30 1956, in the immediate aftermath of the Suez *débâcle*. During the febrile weeks of diplomatic and military activity leading up to joint-action at Suez, France's atomic energy commission had also signed a protocol with its Israeli counterpart to construct a reactor for research purposes. This appears to have been signed on September 17 1956; although the precise timing and content of initial nuclear agreements between Israeli and French authorities have been the subject of considerable subsequent controversy ²¹. Recent research, drawing on archival sources, suggests that an agreement was signed on December 12 1956, i.e. just after Suez, with an accord on nuclear weapons' research agreed eight months later on August 21 1957 ²². The

and motivation of Péan's informants reflected their anger over Israel's attack on Osiraq; Hersh, 1991, p.64.

²⁰ Crosbie, 1974, pp. 114-121, Kassir, 1992, p. 265.

²¹ Kassir p.267, drawing heavily on Péan.

²² Vaisse 1998, pp.620-625, devotes a section to nuclear issues, his archival research confirms much of what Péan's speculative, interview-based approach had suggested in 1981. See also Vaisse, M. et al (eds.) *L'énergie nucléaire en Europe...* P.Lang, Bern, 1994.

outcome of these accords was France's decision to construct the nuclear facility at Dimona, in the Negev, over the subsequent 3-4 years. As Israel's ambassador to France subsequently confirmed, this was not, as had been initially presented a simple research tool, but a reactor of at least 24 megawatts²³.

Military nuclear co-operation was not only the logical extension of the close military links which evolved in 1953-56, but it was overseen by the same politicians on both sides, for the same reasons. Guy Mollet's defence minister was Bourguès-Maunoury, who, assisted by Abel Thomas had played a key role in promoting strategic co-operation between the two countries. Leading French generals such as Ely and Koenig, who had championed conventional Franco-Israeli military cooperation, were also key proponents of a French nuclear capability. In many cases this stance was the product of personal sympathy for Israel and strategic outlook dominated by need for independent French power. Such support was not restricted to figures in the Fourth Republic. Pierre Guillaumat, who became a leading figure in the Gaullist movement, controlled the CEA for much of the 1950s before briefly becoming the Fifth Republic's first minister of defence (1958-60) for atomic affairs. Guillaumat was a staunch supporter of Israel and his pre-eminent position among French nuclear establishment facilitated co-operation. This was also true of Jacques Soustelle, minister of scientific research with responsibility for atomic affairs 1959-60. Soustelle, along with Debré, de Gaulle's first prime minister, had in 1956 been among the most prominent Gaullists to support Israel²⁴. Soustelle parted ways with de Gaulle over Algeria in January 1961. He was replaced as minister by Guillaumat, who went on to become the most pre-eminent Gaullist technocrat of the Fifth Republic²⁵. Guillaumat subsequently played a central role in the development of France's energy policy and was a key architect in relations with Arab oil suppliers. On the Israeli side, Shimon Peres, backed by Ben Gurion and working closely with ambassador Jakob Tsur in Paris, remained the principal architect of Franco-Israeli ties, in both conventional military and nuclear co-operation spheres²⁶.

²³ Tsur, J. *Prélude à Suez*, Presses de la Cité, Paris, 1968.

²⁴ Cohen, 1974, p.63.

²⁵ Soutou, G.-M. et al (eds), *Pierre Guillaumat, la passion des grandes projets industrielles*, eds. *rive droit*, Paris 1995.

²⁶ Tsur, 1968.

De Gaulle, on coming to power in May 1958 appears to have immediately attempted to halt Franco-Israeli cooperation over nuclear weapons research, and scaled-down civilian cooperation. On June 17 1958 one of the first decisions of de Gaulle's newly convened defence committee was to suspend all bilateral nuclear technical cooperation agreements. Despite this decision, work on Dimona actually accelerated in 1959, largely under the impulsion of the minister in charge, Soustelle. This inconsistency created friction between de Gaulle and his premier Debré on the one hand and the ministers involved, particularly Soustelle and Guillaumat, on the other²⁷. In 1959 and 1960 de Gaulle remained concerned about the scale and nature of nuclear cooperation. In March 1960, realising that non-military cooperation, including the delivery of uranium, was continuing, he sought clarification from Ben Gurion, visiting Paris in June 1960. Such cooperation appears to have been finally suspended in January 1961. De Gaulle was in particular worried that Ben Gurion might reveal the extent of Franco-Israeli nuclear cooperation to the US, further exacerbating uneasy US-French relations. The US was already suspicious both of France's sharing of nuclear know-how, and of Israel's reluctance to open its "research" facilities to inspection. It was only after considerable fuss in the USA that the Franco-Israeli cooperation over Dimona was publicised in December 1960, prompting Ben Gurion to admit to the Knesset that Israel did have a nuclear programme. It was these US revelations, coupled with Israeli refusal to countenance independent verification of activities at Dimona that seem to have prompted a "final" French cabinet decision to halt all deliveries of material for Dimona in mid-January 1961. By this time Soustelle and his aides had left the government as the clash between De Gaulle and the military over Algeria intensified. Despite this, work on the Dimona plutonium processing plant, notably by the principal contractor St. Gobain, continued, indeed There is considerable evidence that French work on Dimona continued in a quasi-clandestine manner throughout the early sixties²⁸. It is clear that, well after the departure of Soustelle, elements within France's defence and nuclear establishments remained partisan to close ties with Israel. De Gaulle's

²⁷ Vaisse, 1998, p.621.

²⁸ Kassir, 1992, 285-287. Crosbie, 1974, plausibly suggests that large number of French continued to work in Dimona throughout the sixties, p.169. This is supported by Péan, 1991.

foreign minister Couve de Murville condemned the clandestine manner that nuclear atomic issues continued to be dealt with outside normal diplomatic channels ²⁹.

4 The continuity of Franco-Israeli relations under De Gaulle

The issue of nuclear cooperation appears to have been central to de Gaulle's dealing with Ben Gurion. Ben Gurion made two official visits to Paris, in June 1960 and June 1961. De Gaulle was unstinting in his praise for Ben Gurion and his admiration for Israel and made clear his intention to continue close relations with Israel. In May 1959 the president despatched Guy Mollet to Israel to reassure Israeli leaders of de Gaulle's support for the 1956 action and France's continued commitment to Israel's defence ³⁰. However, relations in the first decade of the Fifth Republic were to be modified in three ways.

- Firstly, whilst excellent state to state relations would continue, these would be on a more regular, official footing, doing away with the clandestine and parallel networks of influence which characterised relations during the period 1955-1958.
- Secondly close collaboration in the nuclear domain, particularly on plutonium processing and weapons research, was to cease, although as already stated, this was to prove easier to declare in principle than to implement in practice.
- Thirdly de Gaulle attempted to ensure that France's privileged links with Israel should not be an obstacle to the re-establishment of relations with Arab states, alienated by the Suez invasion and Algerian war.

For obvious personal and political reasons de Gaulle identified closely with Ben Gurion. During the latter's visit to Paris in June 1960 he declared him the "greatest statesman of this century". During the second visit the following year, de Gaulle pronounced Israel a "friend and ally", a phrase that would be much debated during the crisis in bilateral relations which erupted in 1967. While there is little doubting the warmth of personal feeling between the two men, diplomatic relations were nevertheless tempered by series of issues during the 1960 and 1961 visits. Firstly the decision to halt nuclear assistance was made during the mid-1960 visit. Secondly,

²⁹ Vaisse, 1998, p.620.

notwithstanding the “friend and ally” quote, de Gaulle firmly rebuffed the suggestion that the two countries conclude a formal alliance. Following the “unification” of Egypt, Syria and Iraq in April 1963, Ben Gurion pressed for such an alliance with France, Peres openly supporting the idea in the Knesset in June 1963. Yet in political terms mid-1963 marks a watershed in bilateral relations as the influence of Ben Gurion and hawkish key aides such as Shimon Peres was waning as Israeli politicians sought to bring defence and foreign policy dossiers more firmly under civilian control. Some Israeli politicians also began to have misgivings about the proclaimed desire of France to re-establish ties with Arab states from mid-1962. In France publicity about the relationship with Israel in 1965/66 created unease in Paris, reinforcing the hand of those, particularly in the Quai d’Orsay, who favoured re-equilibrating relations in favour of Arab states.

In 1962 the annual joint Franco-Israeli military discussions were suspended. De Gaulle made quite clear to senior ministers that he was opposed to any formal defence arrangement with Israel. However, de Gaulle did agree delivery of 72 Mirage III planes during Ben Gurion’s visit in June 1961, some suggesting that this was in part as recompense for the downgrading of nuclear cooperation. Indeed French arms supplies to Israel increased during the period 1958-65. Notably for aviation manufacturer Dassault, Israel became a key customer and partner in research and production. Much of the research on the Mirage III and V series of planes was done in conjunction with Israel and there were a series of agreements that France would purchase Israeli made components, in part to offset the significant trade imbalance due to the growing volume of military sales to Israel. In 1966, Dassault also began work on Israel’s first surface to surface, “Jericho” missile.

Levi Eshkol, who succeeded Ben Gurion in 1963, visited Paris in June 1964, seeking and obtaining reassurances over the supply of French spare parts to the Israeli airforce in the event of war in the region, the Israeli’s now almost entirely dependent upon the French. Abba Eban also visited France in February 1966. The visit led to the contract to supply 60 Mirage V signed in the summer of 1966. It was these planes that would be at the centre of embargo controversy a year later. Some writers

have tried to portray Franco-Israeli ties between 1958 and 1967 as progressively worsening, as if there was some gradual, ineluctable path to the break of 1967. Clearly this was not the case. Although he did redefine the limits of bilateral cooperation, in both nuclear and military domains, de Gaulle remained a partisan of Israeli interests. However, he incorporated these into the broader Fifth Republic foreign policy framework which he was elaborating. Crucially, this framework included the re-establishment of relations with Arab states.

5 The re-invention of an Arab policy: restoring diplomatic links

The previous section reviewed de Gaulle's shifting attitudes towards Israel between 1958 and the mid-sixties. As explained above, one of his preconditions for France's ongoing close diplomatic and commercial links with Israel after 1958 was that these should not prevent the restoration of diplomatic ties between France and Arab states. Although restoring diplomatic links was to take over five years, de Gaulle was made acutely aware of the need for France to re-establish a broader presence in the Middle East during his first weeks back in power. Events in the region in July 1958 reinforced de Gaulle's conviction that a comprehensive Middle Eastern policy was a necessary component of his plan to restore France's global power and prestige and attain an equal diplomatic footing with the US and Britain.

As already noted, the crises in France and Algiers which ended the Fourth Republic and triggered de Gaulle's return to power in May 1958 coincided with a series of political convulsions in the Middle East. Military officers in Iraq overthrew the monarchy in Baghdad on July 14. They promptly suspended Iraq's membership of the pro-western "Baghdad Pact" defence grouping on which US and British visions of security in the Middle East then rested. The following day US marines landed in Lebanon to quash Arab nationalist threats to president Camille Chamoun. British troops were simultaneously despatched to Jordan. British and American actions reflected their perceptions that both the Iraqi revolution and events in Lebanon were evidence of the growing strength of pan-Arab political movements, inspired, encouraged and supported by Nasser's Egypt. Three months earlier, on February 1 Egypt and Syria had formed the United Arab Republic. In mid-1958 it was initially assumed that revolutionary Iraq would join the Nasserist fold.

De Gaulle was incensed that the US and British authorities had not consulted France before launching a military intervention. His anger was fuelled by the fact that during initial discussions with Macmillan just a fortnight earlier on June 29 and 30, de Gaulle had been reassured by an apparent understanding that Britain and France would liase over the crisis then brewing in Lebanon. Lebanon was also the only Middle Eastern state which de Gaulle both knew personally, and where France retained a modicum of influence. Inevitably, the fact that France was not consulted served to confirm de Gaulle's long-standing conviction of the "Anglo-Saxon" powers' perfidious intentions in the Middle East, responsible in De Gaulle's mind for France's humiliating eviction from the Levant 12 years earlier ³¹.

In addition, the Anglo-American intervention also contravened the 1950 Tripartite Declaration. Evidently this was rather academic in that, although never abrogated, the 1956 Suez intervention had annulled this. Nevertheless it was of relevance to de Gaulle in that it provided precisely the kind of model of great power co-operation around which he wanted to build his global, post-1958 foreign policy.

The fact that France was not consulted on, or involved in Anglo-American initiatives in the Middle East in 1958 was a salutary reminder that if de Gaulle was to attain for France the great power status and profile to which he aspired, then he would have to re-establish a broader policy and presence in the Middle East. As such the marginalisation of France in the July 1958 crisis informed de Gaulle's first major foreign policy initiative towards France's western allies; the "memorandum" of September 17 1958 which the French leader personally addressed to Macmillan and Eisenhower ³². This 500-word note effectively sketched the agenda which would dominate France's dealings with its NATO allies over the coming decade. The memorandum suggested a radical overhaul of security arrangements. De Gaulle specifically criticised four aspects of NATO's existing architecture. Firstly he called into question the narrow US-European focus of the Atlantic treaty, suggesting in its place an expansion of political coordination and cooperation among allies, notably

³¹ Evidently this echoed the resentment of Anglo-Saxon interests noted earlier. The French vs British and US angle is very present in French writings on the Middle East in the late 1950s, see the 1959 works of Pierre Rondot and Benoist-Mechin.

extending it to the Middle East and Africa. Secondly he proposed a security framework in which Britain and France were perceived as equal partners with the US, rather than simply being junior, subordinate clients. Thirdly, for de Gaulle it was essential that such equality extend to nuclear issues, the notion that only the US and Britain should have nuclear capabilities was unacceptable to France. An acceptance of the US's monopoly on nuclear force was incompatible with the Gaullist vision of France. This was linked to his fourth criticism, of the integrated nature of NATO's military command, which left French forces under US control. Unsurprisingly, such a radical redesign was rebuffed. Macmillan was silent and Eisenhower, who had good relations with de Gaulle, replied timidly, in cautious, vague tones on October 20.

The initial impetus for De Gaulle's Arab policy therefore came not simply from potential commercial gains, or the perception of the Middle East as strategic importance in terms of oil, but as a region of superpower confrontation and thus a necessary part of France's global policy. This poses a question which will be a recurrent theme in the remainder of the text; *to what extent was there an explicit reinvention of France's Arab policy under De Gaulle?* In this and subsequent sections I will argue that for De Gaulle himself, the Middle East was principally a key element within a broader foreign policy vision aimed at restoring French prestige and autonomy on a global stage, rather than an end in itself. In an evidently unplanned, but nevertheless fortuitous manner, this was boosted by the critical stance De Gaulle took towards Israel in June 1967.

Although the need to restore links with Arab countries was clear from 1958, in large part because of the ongoing war in Algeria it would be five years before attempts to re-establish normal diplomatic relations succeeded. However, this was not for want of trying. In the summer of 1958 informal discussions began with both Egypt and the new regime in Iraq with a view to settling outstanding differences. In Iraq French concern focused on the new government's attitudes to the CFP and French oil supplies. These are discussed in the next chapter.

De Gaulle's desire to refocus France's Middle Eastern policy was reflected in two, inter-linked domains. Firstly in his choice of foreign minister. Maurice Couve de Murville had been ambassador in Egypt between 1950-54, before being promoted to Washington. In July 1956, in the middle of the Suez expedition to which he was opposed, he was moved to Bonn. As such he was distinctly *not* part of the entourage of pro-Israeli Gaullists outlined above. Although the constitution of 1958 granted the president extensive powers over foreign and defence policy, de Gaulle largely concerned himself with the broad orientation of policy, leaving the detailed formulation and implementation to Couve de Murville. This day to day control of foreign policy reinforced the second domain, the fact that the prerogatives of the foreign ministry itself and the formal channels of foreign policy making, were strengthened. This, at least in theory, marked an end to the cabals, lobbies and informal influence wielded by the interior and defence minister under the Fourth Republic and restored both the influence and confidence of Quai d'Orsay which had been totally marginalised under Christian Pineau during the Suez period. This formalisation of policy both reflected and reinforced the "normalisation" of Arab policy during Couve de Murville's ten year stint as de Gaulle's foreign minister.

Couve de Murville initially attempted a rapprochement with Egypt. This was an obvious first step for two reasons. Firstly there was a series of unresolved financial issues stemming from the seizure of French assets during the Suez operation which both sides were eager to resolve³³. Indeed negotiations on these were already under way in Geneva in the closing months of the Fourth Republic. Secondly it was hoped that resolution of these differences with Egypt would facilitate a broader diplomatic opening for France in the Middle East. More pressingly, with Nasser at the height of his influence, rapprochement with Egypt appeared to also offer a path towards the Algerian nationalist movement. Egypt headed Arab support for the Algerian nationalist movement, the FLN, whose government in exile, the GPRA, was based in Cairo.

In fact, the Algerian war and Egypt's support for Algeria's FLN proved a decisive barrier to initial attempts at Franco-Egyptian rapprochement. The technical aspects

³³ Kassir, 1992, p.25.

of the financial disputes arising from the nationalisation of the Suez canal were resolved with the initialising of four accords in Geneva in August 1958. However, despite this apparent breakthrough, and the fact that in May 1959 Couve de Murville met with the Egyptian ambassador to Switzerland, Saroite Okacha (a key proponent of Franco-Egyptian rapprochement, who later became minister of culture), relations remained deadlocked over Egyptian support for the FLN. During 1958/59 Egypt apparently sought not only French recognition of the legitimacy of the FLN, but also a commitment that France scale down military and diplomatic support for Israel. Quasi-official talks were dogged by mistrust on both sides, and collapsed following the arrest of French diplomats on spying charges in Cairo in 1961. The failure to restore relations with Egypt was proof that rapprochement with Arab countries would be impossible without a resolution of the war in Algeria. For the first four years of the Fifth Republic, both domestic and foreign policy was overshadowed by the Algerian war. At home De Gaulle faced the threat of military revolt in 1960 and 1961. Internationally, the war meant France was increasingly marginalised, notably at the United Nations.

In the light of this, the signing of the Evian accords in March 1962, leading to Algerian independence in July, was a crucial turning point in Franco-Arab relations. What is surprising is the relative speed with which formal diplomatic relations were resumed with key Arab states. This is particularly so given that de Gaulle himself is on record as cautioning diplomats not to be seen to be too anxious to re-establish ties³⁴. A month after the signing of the Evian accords, on April 3 1962 an Arab League meeting in Riyadh passed a resolution urging the government and people of France “to establish equitable and beneficial relations with Algeria and the rest of the Arab world”. Four days later Egypt released the French diplomats it had accused of spying the previous year.

The subsequent five year period (1962-67) were characterised by three factors: formal resumption of ties with Arab countries between 1962 and 1963; the increasing frequency of official visits by Arab dignitaries to France, accompanied by the increasingly prominent place accorded to Arab relations in De Gaulle’s rhetoric;

³⁴ Vaisse, 1998, p.630.

and the incorporation of the Arab world into broader framework of Gaullist foreign policy which from 1963 accorded a prominent place to the non-aligned states of the third world.

Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria all established full diplomatic relations with Paris in September 1962, (Syria having separated from Egypt and the United Arab Republic a year earlier). Iraq restored diplomatic relations in January 1963. Three months later in April 1963, Egypt, then by far the most important state in the region, became the last major Arab state to renew relations, completing France's diplomatic "reappearance" throughout the Middle East. Visits to Paris of Arab heads of state followed. King Hussein of Jordan made a state visit to Paris in September 1963, Lebanon's president H  lou followed in May 1965. Meanwhile the number of Arab delegations and senior dignitaries arriving in Paris steadily increased; Jordanians, Saudi Arabians and Syrian all began discussions on bilateral trade and the possibility of acquiring French arms ³⁵. The visit of Egypt's foreign minister to Paris in November 1964 consolidated the process of Franco-Egyptian rapprochement, which culminated in the visit of Egypt's vice-president Abdel Hakim Amar to Paris in September 1965. This visit was accorded a high profile in Paris. It prompted numerous official statements in support of Arab states and peoples as well as a good deal of media coverage. The Egyptians also apparently used to the visit to caution France over its apparently unconditional support for, and delivery of weaponry to, Israel ³⁶. However, during the period 1962-66, French trade and investment in the Middle East remained very limited. The restoration of diplomatic and cultural ties was accompanied by calls for more assertive commercial policies, particularly in order to compete more effectively with "Anglo-Saxon" interests in the region ³⁷

6 De Gaulle's foreign policy framework; superpower politics and non-alignment

³⁵ Vaisse, 1998, p.630. Combat, Paris, 23.1.63.

³⁶ Kassir, 1992, p.42.

³⁷ Chasten  t, J. "Ce r  le essentiel que la France ne doit pas perdre au Proche-Orient", L'Aurore, 4.3.64. Lyautey, P. "Notre pr  sence au Proche-Orient" Notre R  publique, 11.2.64. Lyautey wrote extensively on the need to promote French interests in the region. See also "La rentr  e de la France dans l'Orient nouveau, Le Monde 15.9.62, and his vague, romanticised book Les nouveaux r  volutions du Proche Orient, Julliard, Paris, 1968.

The few existing studies of French policy in the Middle East in the 1960s, focus almost uniquely on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed most of the books drawn on here are essentially studies of Franco-Israeli relations which deal with broader Franco-Arab relations only in so far as they concerned the Arab-Israeli conflicts. Before going on to examine how France's relations with oil producing states of the region in general, and Iraq in particular, evolved subsequently, the remainder of this chapter will consider how the Middle East as a whole fitted into the new architecture of Gaullist foreign policy. The reappraisal of relations with Israel and Arab countries during the 1960s occurred as a total redefinition of both the instruments and goals of French foreign policy was undertaken by de Gaulle himself. A key element of this restructuring was the prominence that policy gave to third world and non-aligned states. French attitudes to Arab states in the late sixties - and conversely, Arab perceptions of France - can only be fully understood in this context.

Unlike most subjects treated here, there is both an extensive literature and a broad consensus among analysts as to the nature, motivations, framework and goals of Gaullist foreign policy. This is both because they marked such a decisive break with the past and have proved so enduring³⁸. All analysts concur that de Gaulle's foreign policy contained many contradictions, notably between rhetoric and reality, grandiose intentions and actual outcomes. Nevertheless key characteristics of France's Fifth Republic foreign policy as formulated by de Gaulle can be summarised in the following five points:

- The Fifth Republic constitution of 1958 greatly strengthened the prerogatives of the president in the domain of foreign policy. The initial domestic political constraints upon de Gaulle's foreign policy making were further reduced after 1962; peace in Algeria allowing the appointment of a new government and the removal of effective parliamentary and military restraints to the President's power

³⁸ Kolodziej, E.A. French international policy under De Gaulle and Pompidou; the politics of grandeur, Cornell U.P. Ithaca, 1974. Vaisse, M. La Grandeur; politique étrangère du général de Gaulle 1958-1969, Fayard, Paris, 1998. Gordon, P.H. A certain idea of France; French security policy and the Gaullist legacy, Princeton UP, Princeton, NJ, 1995. Cerny, P.G. The politics of grandeur; ideological aspects of De Gaulle's foreign policy, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980. See also De Gaulle en son siècle : actes des Journées internationales tenues à l'Unesco, Paris, 19-24 novembre 1990. Plon/La Documentation française, Paris, 1992.

- In an international context increasingly dominated by the cold war, France under De Gaulle was allied to the west. Yet de Gaulle's international vision rested on a rejection of the notion of a bi-polar world dominated by two superpowers, each with subordinate, satellite allies. De Gaulle thus systematically challenged the notion of NATO as a US dominated alliance. He resisted the incorporation of French troops into NATO's integrated military command. Although French troops were only fully withdrawn from NATO command in 1966, as already noted, de Gaulle's discordant, alternative vision of the alliance were evident from the 1958 "memorandum".
- For de Gaulle an independent nuclear deterrent was a central element in restoring France's independence and great power status.
- In more theoretical terms, de Gaulle's vision rested on the primacy of the nation-state. It was for this reason that he resisted the notion of a supra-national, or federal Europe, basing his vision of Europe on a strong Franco-German axis, capable of counter-balancing US hegemony
- The centrality of independent states operating according to their own interests led de Gaulle to champion the emergence of newly independent states, thus projecting a very specific post-colonial global role for France.

France's Middle Eastern policy was conditioned by the second and last of these characteristics, the region being both an arena of rivalry with firstly Britain and then the US and Soviet Union, and an opportunity to forge new alliances with nation-states. The last section already outlined how in ending the Algerian war, the Evian accords were decisive in allowing the diplomatic re-entry of France to the Arab Middle East. However, the end of the war in Algeria was a watershed which had far broader implications for de Gaulle's vision of Fifth Republic foreign policy, as it effectively closed the colonial chapter of French history. In doing so it ended France's diplomatic isolationism, notably from the growing number of newly independent and non-aligned countries. In a remarkable turn-around, in the five years from 1962-67 France's international reputation shifted from a country waging a brutal colonial war to the champion of nationalism in the third world. This was

particularly so among those countries seeking to preserve their independence in the shrinking middle ground between the two superpowers.

With colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria having paralysed the Fourth Republic, on coming to power in 1958 de Gaulle was not only committed to ending the violence, generated by war in Algeria but also to closing the colonial chapter. The period 1958-63 also brought the independence of all of France's Black African colonies, all but one of which forged extensive defence and cooperation accords with the metropolis.

In many respects the years 1962/63 mark a watershed in foreign policy orientation. De Gaulle shifted from a concentration on relations with Europe and US to those with the third world. This shift was explicit and in part reflected the failure of de Gaulle's Atlantic and European visions. In January 1963 the French President rejected the offer by the US to join Britain in accepting US nuclear weapons after the Nassau meeting of December 1961, and effectively vetoed British membership of the EEC. Although he signed a bilateral deal with Germany's Adenauer the same month, in fact the French blueprint for Europe failed in April 1962. This "Fouchet plan" had aimed at creating a "Union of states" to counter the move towards supranational European Community. Thus it was partly due to a faltering of his Atlantic and European visions that de Gaulle turned to the rest of the globe.

His approach to the third world has several separate strands. The first of these was an emphasis on relations with independent Algeria, both as an end itself, and as a gateway to relations with other non-aligned states. France also sought to broaden cooperation policy away from its pre-1962 focus on Sub-Saharan Africa. De Gaulle also undertook trips to Mexico and then ten states of southern America in mid-1964. In 1966 he visited South East Asia, honing his increasingly critical stance to US bombing of North Vietnam. Finally De Gaulle recognised China in January 1964. These strands were skilfully woven together to successfully portray a France committed to championing third world states, who, while an awkward member of the western alliance, often *appeared* formally committed to neither block, in part by being openly critical of US global ambitions.

Of central importance to France's relations with non-aligned third world states in general, and the Arab world in particular, was the unique relationship formed with independent Algeria after 1962. Under the terms of the Evian accords, France secured continued use of key strategic installations in Algeria for five years. These included the nuclear testing and hydrocarbon facilities in the Sahara, as well as naval bases. However, as will be seen in the next chapter, within three years it was clear that Algeria was intent on nationalising French oil and gas investments. However, despite bitter bilateral wrangles over such issues, plus deep-seated divisions within the Algerian government and increasingly close ties between Algeria and the Soviet Union, France nevertheless maintained a close relationship with post-independence administrations. France adopted a deliberately ambivalent attitude towards successive, increasingly radical Algerian governments, which were beset with internal rivalries. A key reason for this was that, given Algeria's status within the non-aligned movement, close Franco-Algerian ties reinforced French attempts to cultivate support among newly independent states. This was clearly demonstrated at the 1964 Cairo non-aligned summit. Indeed French diplomats explicitly defended the maintenance of good relations with Algiers as providing a springboard into the third world ³⁹.

Boosted by criticism of what he perceived as US imperial involvement in SE Asia, De Gaulle's criticism of the US was in part the basis for his appeal to non-aligned states. By 1964 de Gaulle was openly critical of the US attitudes towards Cuba. Yet it was the rift between China and the Soviet Union in 1963 which provided him with the greatest diplomatic scope to distance France from both superpowers, whilst apparently championing independent, non-aligned states. Despite considerable US pressure not to, France duly recognised (the People's Republic of) China in January 1964. The significance of the move was strengthened as de Gaulle's criticism of the US in Vietnam became more strident from late 1966.

This post-colonial policy of support for third world and non-aligned states was buttressed by a completely reformed French aid and cooperation policy. This was

³⁹ Kolodziej, 1974, p.464, quotes Jean de Broglie, French secretary of state for Algerian Affairs in 1964 "... Algeria is also and especially the narrow door through which we are penetrating the third world... a falling out with Algeria would... endanger the efforts of our worldwide diplomacy".

examined by the Jeanneney commission who in early 1963 reformulated French assistance to better fit the post-colonial mould⁴⁰. The report was partly aimed at diverting domestic criticism of aid, and sought to give the appearance of diversifying assistance away from African states, whom hitherto had accounted for the majority of aid flows. One chapter of the Jeanneney report covered the Arab world; focusing largely on Algeria, it was written by a senior diplomat, Jean Chauvel.

Thus two trends characterised de Gaulle's foreign policy in the mid-sixties, vocally distancing French policy from that of the United States, while championing non-aligned, independent states in Asia, Latin America and Africa. While one cannot discount completely benevolence, or post-colonial obligations, overall, by the mid-sixties France's reformulated role in the north-south equation was designed to give it leverage over east-west superpower rivalry. It also put France in a stronger trade and diplomatic position vis-à-vis other OECD states within the third world. This prompts two questions in terms of this thesis. *On the one hand, how did the Arab states figure within De Gaulle's vision? On the other, how did the Arab states which restored diplomatic ties with France in the period 1963-65 view this global policy?*

Here four factors are of relevance.

- Firstly, rather than viewing "Arab states" as a whole, in fact it was initially France's relations with two states, Algeria and Egypt which were determinant. This was, as outlined above, both because of independent Algeria's political and symbolic importance to the non-aligned movement, and due to Egypt's pre-eminent position in the Arab world.
- Secondly, the post-Evian opening to the Arab world did, irrevocably and with astonishing speed, erase the image of France associated with the Suez invasion, the Israeli alliance and the Algerian war.
- Thirdly, repeated criticism of the US, coupled with the broader, activist policy towards the third world firmly established France's credentials as offering an alternative political and commercial partner to the superpowers. This

⁴⁰ Institut Charles De Gaulle (ed), *De Gaulle et le Tiers Monde*, Pedon, Paris, 1984. Pp 213-230. Although conventionally presented as a watershed in French attitudes to former colonies and the third world, in fact the report itself had largely administrative implications, and indeed was never either fully implemented nor fully published.

was true even for radical states with growing links to the Soviet Union as with Algeria in the mid-sixties, or Iraq a decade later. Nevertheless,

- Fourthly, and finally it should be stressed that these factors alone were insufficient to greatly advance France's commercial and diplomatic standing in the Middle East in the mid-sixties, a region beset both by the Arab-Israeli conflict, and inter-Arab rivalries. It was in this context that de Gaulle's stance during the war of June 1967 played a decisive role. By clearly censoring Israel for its actions in the six day war, the French President not only abruptly completed the gradual scaling down of Franco-Israeli ties evident during the mid-sixties. Far more importantly for subsequent relations with Arab states, his criticism of Israel and the US clearly demarcated French policy from other that of Western powers, in the Middle East.

7 De Gaulle and 1967 war; embargoes on Israel and French status in the Arab world

De Gaulle's reactions to the events surrounding Israel's launching of war in June 1967 mark a critical watershed in French foreign policy in two respects. By condemning Israel as the aggressor, de Gaulle dramatically and definitively transformed both Israeli and Arab perceptions of France's policy towards the Middle East. June 1967 thus decisively altered the course of subsequent French relations with the countries of the region. Simultaneously, de Gaulle both alienated significant sections of the French public and triggered recriminations and divisions among his own supporters. In retrospect, June 1967 is viewed by many French historians as beginning the tarnishing of de Gaulle's presidency. Public disquiet and media criticism over the Arab-Israeli conflict first fuelled then merged with other signs that the seventy-eight year old was out of touch; with mounting dissent culminating in the revolts of May 1968 and De Gaulle's departure from power a year later.

Rather more importantly for this thesis, the watershed of June 1967 and the manner in which it divided de Gaulle's own followers was to have a lasting impact on what

has subsequently become known as “Gaullist” Arab policy ⁴¹. The events that shaped this watershed, and both their domestic and international implications are now briefly examined, completing this survey of France’s fluctuating relations with Israel and the Arab east to the late sixties.

During April and May 1967 there was a precipitous escalation of inter-state tension in the Middle East. Following attacks in the Galilee in early April, Israel destroyed 20 Syrian Migs. In mid-May the Egyptians ordered the UN out of Gaza and Charm El-Sheikh and on May 22 imposed a blockade on the Gulf of Aqaba. In this atmosphere of heightened tension Israel’s foreign minister Abba Eban, en-route for the US, stopped in Paris on May 24 for discussions with de Gaulle, the leader until then considered among Israel’s closest western allies. De Gaulle explicitly and bluntly cautioned Eban against going to war with Egypt ⁴². Above all fearful that war in the Middle East would engage the superpowers and trigger a third world war, de Gaulle maintained that France would not support any state which opened hostilities. With Jordan aligning with Egypt on May 30, and a new Israeli government appointing Moshe Dayan as defence minister on June 1, the following day De Gaulle issued a statement. While reaffirming France’s view that “that all states in the region have a right to exist...” he warned that “... the state that is first to resort to arms would not have [France’s] approval, still less her support.”

With full-scale war appearing increasingly likely, de Gaulle reinforced this position by declaring an embargo on the sale and delivery of arms and spare parts to all front line states on June 3. On paper the embargo applied to Israeli and Arab states equally. In reality, given the preceding decade and a half of arms and aeronautical sales to Israel detailed above, the practical impact of the embargo was largely upon Israel. Virtually all of Israel’s 250 combat aircraft were of French origin. More

⁴¹ It should be noted that contemporary polemics over the nature of De Gaulle’s heritage necessarily revolve around interpretations of his stance in 1967. These resurfaced during the debate over France and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. See interview with Roland Dumas in *Le Monde* 12.3.91 and Cohen, S. “De Gaulle et les Arabes”, *Le Monde* 21.3.91.

⁴² The exact wording of the de Gaulle/Eban exchange has been the subject of considerable debate. Lacouture, J., *De Gaulle; the ruler 1945-70*, Harvill, London, 1993. p.439, provides a good comparison of the versions both men subsequently published. This point is of crucial importance for those who allege that, in bluntly threatening Israel rather than seeking a negotiated diplomatic solution, De Gaulle reinforced Israel’s sense of diplomatic and military isolation, pushing it to strike first.

importantly, given the Soviet Union's recent despatch of Migs to both Syria and Egypt, delivery of the 60 Mirages V-J Israel had ordered from Dassault in 1966 was blocked by the embargo.

Despite the scale of domestic controversy generated by the embargo, over the coming months, de Gaulle and French diplomats stuck to the principles underlying the decision, de Gaulle predictably calling for a great power conference as the only vehicle capable of resolving the crisis. France unambiguously backed UN resolution 242 as the basis of a post-war settlement. The French text was more explicit and forceful than the English version, calling for withdrawal from the occupied territories, rather than the vaguer "from Occupied Territories" of the English language version ⁴³. Domestic and international controversy surrounding the French embargo was greatly inflamed by the press conference given by de Gaulle on 27 November 1967. In his inimitable manner, rather than limiting his comment to the immediate crisis, the French President delivered to the world's press a lecture on the historical destiny of nations. Characteristically, he justified his decision in June to warn Israel against war, and censor it when it did not heed his warning, via a broad analysis of the Jewish people, parts of which were widely – if erroneously – interpreted as being anti-semitic ⁴⁴. However, de Gaulle himself saw no contradiction between criticism of Israel's behaviour in June 1967, and his long-standing admiration and support for the state of Israel in general, and its leaders in particular. He was clearly taken aback both by the public outrage his comments generated and by Ben Gurion's lengthy, wounded rebuttal of the press conference ⁴⁵. De Gaulle was deeply stung by the scale and scope of domestic criticism. This, coupled with his irritation that during May and June senior French officers clearly connived to circumvent the embargo (see below), probably reinforced de Gaulle's intransigence over the issue. Certainly formal attempts to have the embargo lifted, notably by the Israeli ambassador to Paris in March 1968, came to nought. Speaking

⁴³ *des territoires occupés*.

⁴⁴ The phrase that the Israelis were "an elite people self-assured and domineering" caused the greatest fuss. The speech, and intensity of that year's debate over Franco-Israeli relations re-kindled the debate over anti-Semitism in France. Aron, 1968. The issue had already been given a renewed twist by the arrival in France of large number of Algerian and other Maghrebian jews in the mid-sixties.

⁴⁵ Ben Gurion, by then out of office, penned a 15-page letter to de Gaulle after the press conference. In his reply, he reiterated the phrase that he perceived Israel as a "friend and ally".

to French parliamentarians in July 1967 de Gaulle justified his position in the following terms: “We told the Israelis not to start a conflict. Now, France does not recognise her conquests. We have been pushed into a position similar to that of the Soviets, but for different reasons. Our policy is to maintain good relations with the Arab countries, so that they will not have them only with the Soviets”⁴⁶.

Formal relations between France and Israel deteriorated further during what was for France the turbulent year of 1968. In both March and May 1968 France endorsed votes censuring Israeli actions in the United Nations. Events at the end of 1968 provoked a near total break-down in relations, although again there is little evidence to support the notion that this was a premeditated move by the French⁴⁷. Following attacks on Israeli targets by Palestinians in Athens, on 28 December 1968 Israeli commandos took control of Beirut airport and destroyed eight Middle East Airlines’ planes on the tarmac. De Gaulle took the assault as a personal affront. He saw it as an unjustified attack on the territorial integrity of Lebanon, the one country in the region with which he had long personal ties. The fact that Israel’s used French (Alouette) helicopters to mount a raid which destroyed French (Caravelle and Comete) airliners, among others, added insult to injury. As a result, on 3 January 1969 France tightened its 1967 arms embargo, specifically banning the export of spare certain parts which had still been permitted after June 1967. The embargo was announced to ministers and the French public only 3 days after its imposition. De Gaulle also promptly despatched his information minister to Lebanon and redoubled efforts to convene a four-power conference to implement resolution 242.

Given both the domestic unpopularity surrounding de Gaulle’s censorship of Israel, and its legacy for Franco-Arab relations, it is worth summarising why he adopted the stance. What is clear is that the break with Israel was *not* pre-meditated. His criticism and subsequent embargo arose from the principles underpinning de Gaulle’s broader view of international relations, rather than any change in his longstanding admiration for Israel, or far less from any new-found respect for Arab states. The rupture arose primarily because of the diametrically different analyses

⁴⁶ Quoted in Lacouture, 1993, p.442.

made by de Gaulle and the Israeli leadership of the likely significance of Egypt's closure of the Gulf of Aquaba and the international ramifications of renewed war in the region ⁴⁸.

In the light of the debates that the decision triggered, and the amount written and spoken by De Gaulle himself on the matter, three factors appear to have influenced the decision.

- Firstly by May 1967 De Gaulle was deeply preoccupied by likelihood of a third world war. He viewed the USSR's encroachment on the Middle East largely as a by-product of US actions in Vietnam. As such both Vietnam and the Israeli-Arab conflict provided De Gaulle with examples of local conflicts, which the bi-polar international environment exacerbated. In his view, any war in Middle East was thus likely to trigger a global confrontation.

- Secondly, for de Gaulle, the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba did not fundamentally threaten Israel's existence. For de Gaulle the blockade did not constitute an act of war, and in any case he had felt since the late fifties that Israelis had greatly exaggerated the military threat that the Arab states posed to its survival. Within this perspective, both the warning addressed to Abba Eban in May, and the embargo of June 3 1967, were designed to try and deter the Israeli's from starting hostilities. Indeed in his controversial press conference that November, de Gaulle insisted that the facts largely vindicated his analysis; the speed and scale of Israel's victory indicated that had been right.

- Thirdly, again linked to his global view, De Gaulle also saw in the crisis as an opportunity for a four power conference, reaffirming his long-standing desire and conviction that only Great Power negotiations could contain the likelihood of regional wars drawing in superpowers.

Numerous opinion polls as well as press coverage at the time testified to the unpopularity of the embargo among the French public. There was also an upsurge of popular support - both moral and financial - for pro-Israeli lobby groups such as the

⁴⁷ This was usually the line of the popular, pro-Zionist literature published in France in the wake of the 1967 war. See Dan, U. *De Gaulle contre Israël*, éditions premieres, Paris 1968 (reissued in 1969 under the title of "Embargo"). See also Uri Dan's *Mirage contre Mig*, Laffont, Paris, 1968.

⁴⁸ See the succinct article by Cohen, S. "De Gaulle and Israël" in Barnavi, E. Friedlander, S. (eds), *La politique étrangère du Général De Gaulle*, PUF, Paris, 1985.

Alliance France-Israel, as well as lobbying efforts by both Jewish and non-Jewish French groups ⁴⁹. Some accounts see the domestic furore over official French censorship of Israel's actions as having decisively contributed to the growing dissatisfaction with de Gaulle which culminated in the April 1969 referendum defeat and departure from office. Evidently such suggestions are impossible to quantify, particularly in the wake of the domestic convulsions of May 1968.

In addition to these significant shifts in general public opinion, criticism of Israel also prompted divisions within the ranks of de Gaulle's own supporters, polarising opinion between those who supported his criticism of Israel and those who were outraged at the apparent severing of long-standing ties between Gaullist republicans and Israel ⁵⁰. Those in the former group are significant for the ensuing story as they formed the nucleus around which explicit promotion of a "Gaullist" Arab policy was subsequently conducted. Prominent amongst these was Louis Terrenoire, a close colleague of the General who switched from being an ardent lobbyist for Israel to a founder of pro-Arab pressure group, *Association de solidarité franco-arabe* (ASFA), whose publication *France Pays Arabes* would in the seventies popularise Franco-Arab ties in general, and France's relationship with Baathist Iraq in particular ⁵¹.

The splits both within de Gaulle's entourage and the French administration more generally over the president's attitude towards Israel in June 1967 undermined the effectiveness of the embargo itself. There were large scale deliveries of arms and military hardware from France to Israel in the weeks leading up to June 5 1967. These included the "loan" of 20 Mystère III planes to Israel. Despite the furore the embargo created, it subsequently emerged that all outstanding military orders *except* the completed Mirage V-J planes were in fact delivered to Israel, either incognito, or via "flexible" interpretations of the terms of the embargo. These deliveries suggest that de Gaulle's apparent attempts to bring an end to the informal, parallel relations between French military and aeronautical establishment and their Israeli counterparts which had flourished under the Fourth Republic were far from complete. This is

⁴⁹ Crosbie, 1974, p.195, fn 12.

⁵⁰ Cohen, 1974, chs. 9 and 10.

⁵¹ See chapter four for details of ASFA, Terrenoire et.al. Of broader intellectual and political significance was the way in which left-wing support for Algerians' struggle for independence meant that sectors of the French left were later more readily sympathetic to Arab and Palestinian causes.

unsurprising considering the extent of bilateral cooperation, particularly in aircraft research and construction, during the 1960s. Dassault in particular had a series of cooperation and production accords with Israeli partners. These included Mirage III and V series aircraft, for which Israeli companies had become significant sub-contractors. Dassault also designed, produced and tested Israel's first surface to surface missiles, the MD660. Joseph Szydlowski, owner of France's Turboméca which manufactured aircraft engines had close ties with Israel. A month after the embargo was announced, he established Turboméca-Israel to produce engines within Israel ⁵². Further evidence of the porous nature of the embargo, and the continued links between French and Israeli military authorities, surfaced early in 1970 with the controversy surrounding the delivery of a dozen speedboats to Israel by shipyards in Cherbourg. Five of these were delivered, legally, during 1968, two others had mysteriously departed on the eve of the renewed embargo of January 3 1969. The five remaining boats slipped out of Cherbourg late in December 1969. This was in clear contravention of the embargo, and prompted a significant scandal.

The practical implications of the embargo - in terms of its impact upon Israel's military capability both during and after the June 1967 war - therefore in retrospect appears to have been limited. However, the move had international implications beyond simply the rift in Franco-Israeli relations. In declaring the embargo and criticising Israel as the aggressor, France once again decisively distanced its own policies from those of the US. This reinforced its ongoing criticisms of the US over Vietnam, further boosting its support and profile among newly independent states which de Gaulle has so assiduously cultivated within his pro-active policy towards the third world over the previous four years. Conversely, criticism of the US stance in the Middle East, coming in the wake of the decision to withdraw from NATO's military command, evidently reinforced the US's exasperated perception of De Gaulle's France as a maverick global actor ⁵³.

It was noted earlier, that although frequently grounded in principle, in practice, de Gaulle's foreign policy decisions often had paradoxical, or contradictory, effects.

⁵² Crosbie, 1974, p.206.

This was clearly the case over Israel in 1967. One of de Gaulle's prime motivations appears to have been to resist the encroachment of the cold war polarisation in the Middle East. Yet France's unilateral embargo clearly helped push Israel into a far closer military relationship with the US. Unable to depend upon France for supplies, Israel swiftly consolidated its military relationship with the US. This had begun, somewhat tentatively, only three years earlier when Israel ordered Skyhawk rockets. Problems with French supplies in 1967 prompted Israel to order US tanks and its the fleet of Mirage III were shortly supplemented with Phantom F-4s. Therefore de Gaulle's stance on the war not only further twisted already strained US-French relations, but actually hastened superpower involvement in the Middle East .

Returning to the second of the two guiding questions asked earlier in the chapter the most important international outcome of the embargo for French foreign policy was the way it changed relations with Arab countries. In theory it should be possible to separate the rhetorical and symbolic aspects of Arab sympathy for France's stance from the subsequent material benefits that rapprochement with Arab states had for France. In practice, the two became closely linked. Literally overnight, De Gaulle's decision to criticise Israel and place an embargo on arms deliveries to the region in June 1967 radically altered Arab perceptions of French diplomacy. In the wake of the war, viewed through the eyes of beleaguered Arab leaders and peoples, France alone among western powers had distanced itself from Israel. This earned the French President unsolicited, but nevertheless rapturous, praise. Nasser acclaimed France's "highly moral" stance over the war, stating that de Gaulle was the "only western head of state on whom the Arabs can rely", a sentiment that was echoed throughout the Arab world ⁵⁴. Thus the decision of June 1967 consummated at a single stroke, the "rapprochement" with the Arab world that French diplomats had been cautiously working on since 1962. This had two, lasting effects. Firstly during the final two years of his life, De Gaulle was revered by Arab statesmen and editorialists alike. Secondly, the fact that France was suddenly held in high esteem facilitated diplomatic and trade contacts between France and Arab states. These intensified significantly from mid-1967. As subsequent chapters will explain, by the

⁵³ In mid-1967, when Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban raised the French call for a four power summit, US president Johnson replied, with exasperated irony, "the four great powers!? But who the hell are the other two?" Quoted in Vaisse, 1998, p.647.

early 1970s these contacts had been elaborated into a comprehensive “Arab policy” towards the Mashreq and Gulf Arab states.

Clearly other consequences of the 1967 war consolidated this trend. With both the Soviet Union and the US being drawn in to the region more fully by the war, only France appeared to offer an alternative to closer diplomatic alignment with either the Soviet Union or the US. Within the Middle East, such an option was to be particularly significant for those states wary of Soviet influence, be they radical military leaderships such as Iraq or Libya, or conservative monarchies of the Gulf. As such both the war and France’s stance consolidated De Gaulle’s “non-aligned” policy framework towards the newly independent states of the third world post 1963. The stance provided an apparent coherence to regional policy in Middle East comparable to that already elaborated by De Gaulle in Asia, Latin America and Africa during 1962-66.

Secondly, the war simultaneously demonstrated both the limitations of Soviet military assistance, and the need for Arab states to rearm. French aeronautical and armaments industries were not only well placed to supply arms, but also France was able to offer credit, without the political strings attached to US or Soviet military assistance. Equally, notwithstanding the fact that some key figures in the French aeronautical industry remained staunchly pro-Israeli, France was in the process of diversifying its military and aeronautical exports. Israel had been both the first, and by far the most important initial, export market for French aircraft exports in the late fifties. Partly because of the success of these exports, by the mid-sixties numerous OECD countries were also purchasing Mirage planes and Alouette and Super Frelon helicopters. Evidence suggests that it is wrong to think that the arms sales to Arab states in the late sixties occurred *because of* the loss of Israeli markets. However, it is clear that while the June ’67 Mirage-Mig comparisons has become stuff of myth⁵⁵ subsequently, it clearly did have an effect upon Arab attitudes to French arms sales.

From mid-1967 to 1969, the practical outcome of these factors can be seen most clearly in France’s relationship with three Arab states; Saudi Arabia, Libya and Iraq.

⁵⁴ Vaisse, 1998, p.644.

The steady arrival of Arab diplomatic and trade missions in Paris from 1963 onwards accelerated markedly from mid-1967. In July 1967 Prince Fahd, then Saudi Arabia's Defence Minister, visited de Gaulle, opening discussions which in March 1968 led to the signing of a contract worth around \$300m for AML-90 tanks and light armoured cars. Prince Abdel Aziz al-Saoud led the March 1968 Saudi delegation to Paris, which also signed a series of military and civilian cooperation agreements. This proved to be just the first of a series of increasingly elaborate and expensive Saudi armour contracts with France over the next 15 years ⁵⁶. The following month, in April 1968 a Libyan delegation had extensive discussions on arms sales in Paris. After the change of regime in September, these discussions culminated in Libyans ordering 110 Mirage V planes from Dassault. This, then the largest single French foreign arms sale, prompted considerable controversy when made public in 1970. Nasser's fulsome praise for de Gaulle enhanced Franco-Egyptian relations which also led to military orders, notwithstanding the embargo; Cairo reportedly ordering 525 half-track armoured cars in early 1969.

However, it was the relationship with Iraq which best exemplified the new warmth in Franco-Arab relations. Iraq's minister of planning visited France in late 1967, preparing the way for an official visit by the head of state, General Aref in February 1968. As with the first Egyptian senior delegation in 1965, Aref's visit was accorded considerable prominence. De Gaulle declared to Aref that France was "ready to assist you according to our means" and discussions led to the signing of a series of bilateral agreements. France agreed to provide military training, coupled with sales of 70 AMX-30 armoured cars and opened discussions on 54 Mirage V planes, scheduled for delivery in 1970.

As will be explained in chapter three, these discussions over arms purchases were inextricably intertwined with the ongoing negotiations over oil both before and after the change in government from General Aref to Bakr and Saddam Hussein in 1969. As such Franco-Iraqi relations were to reflect the far greater role that oil, both in terms of France's supply requirements, and Arab states' surplus revenues, were to play in French foreign policy in the early 1970s.

⁵⁵ Uri Dan's *Mirage contre Mig*, Laffont, Paris, 1968.

8 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to provide a broad, interpretative account of France's fluctuating interests and alliances in the Middle East up until the late sixties. It has identified factors shaping De Gaulle's perceptions of Middle Eastern policy and examined how these informed his perspective of global politics, through which he, virtually single-handedly, crafted France's Fifth Republic foreign policy framework. Both this general framework and the specific post-1967 legacy of France's symbolic and economic presence in the Arab world were to shape the policies followed by subsequent French presidents, diplomats and private companies with Arab states in general, and Iraq in particular.

The chapter has attempted to highlight three factors:

- Loss of French control over Syria and Lebanon was widely resented by French policy makers as a humiliation inflicted by the British and Americans. Its legacy for Fourth Republic politicians was as the first blow in the escalating crisis of decolonisation in Indochine and the Maghreb. For de Gaulle it fuelled his conviction that Paris' presence in the Middle East was an essential component of French foreign policy. If France was to match the rank and global reach of "Anglo Saxon" rivals, she needed a pro-active policy in the region. For De Gaulle a presence in the Middle East was therefore principally a symbol of global power politics. However, this inchoate sentiment of humiliation by, rivalry with, and resentment of British and American interests was also widespread among post-war French elites. It was clearly exacerbated by the Suez crisis and, as the next chapter will show, informed French energy and oil policy in the region in the 1960s and 70s.
- From the French perspective the Fourth Republic's relationship with Israel was a temporary, conjunctural product of a shared perception of communist and Arab Nationalist opposition to France as seen through the prism of Algeria. The personalised, at times clandestine form that Franco-Israeli ties assumed was due

largely to the internal weaknesses and incoherence of policy formulation and implementation by successive Fourth Republic administrations. With the Algerian war over, after 1962 de Gaulle sought to regularise relations with Israel, who nevertheless remained a significant client of the French arms industry, whilst renewing ties with Arab states. From 1963, this shift in the Middle East was located within a pro-active policy towards non-aligned states as de Gaulle attempted to promote France as an alternative diplomatic and commercial partner to either the US or Soviet Union.

- The abrupt downgrading of relations with Israel in 1967 was *not* a pre-meditated element of a new, more “pro-Arab” French policy in the Middle East. Rather the shift reflected De Gaulle’s fear of the impact that a Middle Eastern war would have on global US-Soviet rivalry. Nevertheless, however unplanned this change was, criticism of Israel and the US clearly reinforced the activist policy towards the third world which de Gaulle had pursued from 1963 onwards. However unintended, the net result of this was that increasingly radicalised Arab nationalist leaders in the Middle East saw in the final years of De Gaulle’s presidency a France eager to establish a substantial political and economic partnership with Arab states. France was manifestly not beholden to either superpower. Untainted by the “imperialist, pro-Israeli” connotations of British and American policy in the region, she was also able and willing to supply arms to increasingly radical Arab leaders.

Thus, after being the *bête noire* of Arab nationalists in the wake of the 1956 Suez invasion, little over a decade later France’s image in the Arab world had been completely reversed. Received by de Gaulle in Paris in February 1968, the Iraqi president Aref succinctly summarised the post-June 1967 Arab view of superpower policies towards the Middle East, stating that in the region France “is in the process of winning hearts, just as the English sun is setting and the tyranny of the Americans is coming to a close”⁵⁷.

In conclusion, it should be restated that the initial impetus for de Gaulle’s Arab policy therefore came not primarily from potential commercial gains, or a perception

⁵⁷ De Gaulle-Aref discussions, 7-8 February 1968. Quoted in Vaisse, 1998, p.646.

of the Middle East as strategically important in terms of oil, but as a region of superpower confrontation and thus a necessary part of France's global policy. As already stated, this begs the question *to what extent was there an explicit reinvention of France's Arab policy under de Gaulle?* For the founder of France's Fifth Republic himself, the Middle East was primarily a core element within a broader foreign policy vision aimed at restoring French prestige and autonomy on a global stage, rather than an end in itself. In an evidently unplanned, but nevertheless politically and commercially fortuitous manner, this vision was buttressed by the critical stance the President took towards Israel in June 1967. Only *after* this, in the last two, twilight years of de Gaulle's presidency did the potential commercial benefits of France's new Arab policy and criticism of Israel become clear. It was subsequently, under the presidency of Pompidou that the economic benefits of the policy were realised as the policy was refocused within the less global, yet more aggressively mercantilist, policy framework of Fifth Republic foreign policy in the 1970s.

How these shifts in foreign policy dovetailed with oil policy towards Iraq, helping France weather the oil shock of 1973 and laying the foundations successful export drive in the Middle East in seventies is subject of next chapter.

Chapter 3: French oil policy and relations with Iraq to 1972.

vc

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- 5 The emergence of a distinct French approach to Iraqi oil
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Chapter 3. French oil policy and relations with Iraq to 1972

1 Introduction

Chapter one identified the roots of France's oil industry in Iraq while chapter two examined the framework of France's relations with Middle Eastern states during the fifties and sixties. Chapter three will now focus on France's relationship with successive Iraqi administrations between 1958 and 1972.

France's fifth, and Iraqi's first, republics came into existence within days of each other in July 1958. Chapter two demonstrated the degree to which de Gaulle's first three years in power were dominated by war in Algeria, and thereafter how official attitudes to the Middle East shifted significantly in the mid-sixties. As we shall see, both Algerian independence in 1962, and the widespread perceptions of de Gaulle having taken a "pro-Arab" stance over the June 1967 war, did influence the evolution of Franco-Iraqi ties.

Yet, despite the fact that Iraqi politics were acutely unstable for the decade following the 1958 revolution, and that both Algeria and Israel were key concerns, at least rhetorically, of Arab politics in the 1960s, these were not the dominant factors in Franco-Iraqi relations. Rather it was disagreement over access to oil reserves which dominated Iraq's relationship, not just with France, but also the US and Britain, in a fairly consistent manner from 1958-72.

As such the primary tussle over access to Iraqi oil, and the secondary issue of whether France's access to Iraqi oil should be sought in conjunction, or in competition, with other Western oil companies and their governments, played a central part in the formulation of Fifth Republic energy policy in the Middle East. While the *Compagnie française des pétroles* (CFP) remained a core component of the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) during the mid-sixties, the French began to distance themselves from their "Anglo-Saxon" partners in the IPC.

Within this perspective, this chapter attempts to present and chronicle the evolution of

Franco-Iraqi bi-lateral relations to 1972. In doing so it attempts to answer two, broader questions which are central to re-thinking French Fifth Republic foreign policy. Firstly did French officials develop a "national" oil policy during the 1960s? Secondly, if so, how did this shape the overall policy framework towards the Middle East followed by de Gaulle and his successors as presented in chapter two?

Examining France's oil and energy policies requires an analysis of the commercial and political aspects of three overlapping issues, which thus form the key themes of this chapter.

- Firstly the *Compagnie française des pétroles* relationship with its "Anglo-Saxon" partners within the Iraq Petroleum Company as successive Iraqi republican regimes (Qassem, the Aref brothers, Baathists) struggled to wrest control of their oil reserves away from the IPC. At least until 1968, CFP appears to personify French government interest in Iraq, even once formal diplomatic relations were re-established early in 1963.

- Secondly the CFP's relationship with the state-owned petroleum company, *Enterprise de recherches et d'activités pétrolières* (ERAP), which adopted the trade name "Elf" in 1966¹. The often antagonistic relationship between the two French oil giants means one cannot discuss "French" oil interests in Iraq in a unitary sense. In reality the equation of oil supplies to France is linked to ERAP's pivotal role in post-independence Algeria, and the need for France to secure alternative supplies from the Middle East, primarily Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Examining the tension between Elf and CFP thus permits an insight into the personalities involved in decision making in the Fifth Republic by rival group of technocrats with immense power and influence.

- Thirdly, intra-French rivalry in the oil industry has to be seen in the context of the more elaborate and ambitious Middle Eastern policy which emerges after de Gaulle's stance in the 1967 Arab Israeli war. This opens new possibilities for French commerce in the Middle East, but increased dependence on oil brings with it a vastly increased commercial deficit with the countries of the region. The increased demand for

¹ Erap was created by merging several French state-owned oil interests in 1966. Its products took the name "Elf" from the late sixties, when CFP also began marketing under the name TOTAL. See Péan

arms in the region provides new export potential for French industry and a means of partially paying for the oil deficit. From 1967/68 onwards this linkage was to be exploited to the full. This meant that many of the key figures involved in policy making became involved in both the arms and oil dossiers. This linkage became even more explicit as a more mercantile policy emerged under Pompidou, particularly after June 1972; the month of Iraq's nationalisation of IPC and Saddam Hussein's visit to Paris. In the early seventies, what began primarily as an "oil for arms" relationship thus widens to broader commercial relationship. The flourishing of the relationship in the mid-seventies is the focus of chapter four.

2 The Qassem administration; 1958-63

In July 1958 France was totally absorbed with the domestic events which saw the demise of the Fourth and rise of the Fifth Republic. Other than the CFP, it did not have immediate interests in Iraq. Concern, as reflected in both French press coverage and de Gaulle's initial statements, was with Lebanon and the manner in which the Anglo-American military intervention there reinforced French marginalisation in the region (see chapter 2). In Iraq, much has been made, not only of the near simultaneous timing of change of regime, but also the explicit references to revolutionary French iconography by the Free Officers who took power in Baghdad. The *Marseillaise* was played on Radio Baghdad by the army, and observers both at the time and subsequently noted the references and parallels with French revolutionary upheavals. Qassem himself drew explicit parallels between the French the Iraqi revolutions in speeches at the time ². France and French thinking had an intellectual impact on certain Francophone elites in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East at the time, and was part and parcel of the cultural and political effervescence of the mid-fifties. In Iraq such currents were evident in the Arab-French revue *Culture Nouvelle*, which included contributors, from both left and right, who had studied in French universities in

P, Séréni, J-P, *Les Emirs de la république*, Seuil, Paris, 1982. Catta, E. Victor de Metz, Total, Paris, 1990.

² Daniel, N. "Contemporary perceptions of the revolution..." ch. 1 in Fernea, R.A. & Roger Louis, Wm. *The Iraqi revolution of 1958*, I.B.Tauris, London, 1991. Daniel ponders the mirroring of the French revolution in Baghdad pp. 21-28. See also *La révolution française et l'Orient 1789-1989*, Cariscript, Paris 1989, a collected work produced by French and Lebanese for the bicentenaire of the revolution.

the 1950s ³. Despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations, France maintained a French Cultural Centre in Baghdad, which facilitated educational and cultural exchanges. Pierre Rossi, who wrote one of the two French works on the revolution in French, headed the Centre. Rossi continued to exercise a certain influence upon the narrow oil and policy circles, and his writings reflect his knowledge of Iraqi student milieu and republican leadership ⁴. Evidently the French revolution influenced subsequent Iraqi historiography, most notably the approach of Hanna Batatu.

Yet these French influences did not prompt an opening of official diplomatic ties with France. France remained a pariah in the Arab world due to the ongoing war in Algeria. While other western nations quickly established relations with Iraq, Paris made no such formal overture. As noted in chapter two, Fifth Republic Arab policy rested on first establishing ties with Egypt; the evident rift and rivalry between Baghdad and Cairo did not alter this. There were however some in France and Iraq who considered that the Francophone leanings of Qassem's new republican administration, not least the Sorbonne educated foreign minister Abdul Jabbar Jomard, could have been more constructively engaged, suggesting that failure to do so had unnecessarily jeopardised oil supplies and commercial ties ⁵.

With the Algerian war a significant issue within the Arab world, republican Iraqi support for the Algerian nationalists became important. Support for Algeria's FLN, and the at least rhetorical hostility to France, became an issue of rivalry within the Arab world, particularly between Iraq's new leaders, Nasser's Egypt and the United Arab Republic

³ Abdul-Salaam Yousif, "The struggle for cultural hegemony", ch 10 in Fernea & Louis, 1991. Vernier, B. *L'Irak d'aujourd'hui*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1963, p.236. See also the intro. To Beau.N, *Paris Capitale Arabe*, Seuil, Paris, 1995.

⁴ Rossi, P. *L'Irak des revoltes*, Paris, 1961. See also Rossi, P. "La culture..." *Orient*, 8, 1958, Paris. (fn 13 in Abdul Salaam, above). Rossi was a friend of Philippe Saint-Robert, whose writings are discussed in ch.4. A quixotic reportage-type book was also written on Qassem's Iraq in 1959, *L'Irak rouge; Khassem entre Moscou et le Caire, l'ordre du jour*, Paris, 1960. See also the memorial to the correspondent of AFP in Baghdad in 1950s, Dauphin, J. *Incertain Irak; tableau de'un royaume avant la tempête*, Librairie Orientaliste P. Geuthnier, Paris, 1991.

⁵ In "Les français sont bienvenus en Irak", *Combat*, Paris, 29.7.58 Jomard is quoted as saying policy to France could change. "Les relations franco-irakiennes; histoire d'un rendez-vous manqué", *Le Monde*, 20.11.58. This article also suggests that an abortive attempt via a young academic linked to the Quai d'Orsay, was made to re-establish formal ties at the time.

(UAR). The Algerian government in exile (GPRA, based in Cairo) had full diplomatic representation in Baghdad. Iraq provided arms, other material support and training, and its media coverage of Algerian support was explicit in its rivalry with the UAR during 1959-61. Paradoxically although British and US governments were pilloried for being imperialist and Zionist, in fact it was the French who seemed to bear the brunt of the criticism in Iraq. In July 1959 Iraq proposed to extend the boycott against Israel to include French products. Relations with France were further tarnished by the fact that the Baghdad branch of a French bank, the *Banque Nationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie*, based in Beirut was the conduit for UAR-funds in the failed Rachid Ali coup against Qassem in December 1958 ⁶. However, the proposed 1959 boycott was not adopted and an easing of restrictions on dealings with French private companies was apparent from early 1960, although at the time France had only limited commercial interests in the country. Aside from the CFP's links, the most significant French ties were via the religious orders ⁷. Calls for a boycott were linked to both the Algerian war and Israel; Qassem's minister of economy made this clear. He stated that calls to limit French imports were due to "French participation in invasion of Egypt in 1956 is only one of our reasons, there is also French repression in Algeria and arms supplies to Israel..." adding that the resumption of Franco-Egyptian trade would not influence Iraq's attitude ⁸. The list of banned products continued into 1962 ⁹.

3 Oil and Law 80 of 1961

It was oil which lay at the root of Iraq's links with the West, the relationship being channeled largely via the Iraq Petroleum Company. Aside from the notions of revolutions and republicanism noted above, French influence was of only marginal importance in the birth of republican Iraq. France's primary concern was its quarter share in the IPC.

⁶ Dann, U. *Irak under Qassem*, Israel U.P., Jerusalem, 1969, p.131. The plot also reportedly involved Iraqi Jews.

⁷ Vernier, B. *Irak d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1963, p.238. Vernier's relatively insightful book was published to coincide with the reopening of diplomatic ties. Pierre Rondot's preface explicitly cites it as part of the "renouveau du rayonnement français"

⁸ "Nous reglons nos affaires économiques sur la base de nos intérêts politiques", *Le Monde*, 27.11.58.

⁹ "L'Irak renforce le boycottage des produits français", *Le Monde*, 23.8.62.

During the first five years of republican Iraq under Qassem, France's interests were largely indistinguishable from those of the US, Britain and Dutch administrations, acting via CFP's commercial partners in the IPC, Esso, Shell and Mobil. France, at least until 1964/65, was therefore in an identical position to other western powers. However, the stand-off between the IPC partners and the Iraqi authorities, notably over the confiscation of oil exploration rights in 1961, was to create confrontation and thus an opportunity for France. Friction allowed the CFP and the French government to differentiate themselves from British and American approaches to Middle Eastern oil development and middle eastern politics more generally by the late sixties. This process of differentiation from "Anglo-Saxon" oil companies' policies in Iraq, which began within the IPC, was to become a central element of the elaboration of a more proactive French energy policy and diplomatic stance in Middle East in the period 1967-72.

The exceedingly protracted and frequently fractious negotiations which followed the San Remo agreement in 1920 (see chapter one), set the pattern for subsequent dealings between the IPC and successive Iraqi governments. Chapter one outlined how the initial agreement was re-negotiated in 1934. Both the volume of oil lifted, and terms on which Iraqi government derived revenue from oil remained a perennial source of conflict. Exports of oil from Iraq increased as new pipelines were installed in 1946-47. Revenue for government shifted from payment gold sterling to profit sharing, eventually based on a 50% share. This arrangement was first operated in Venezuela; in 1950 it was established between Aramco and Saudi Arabia and became the norm throughout the Middle East. In the light of this, in early 1952 a new pricing arrangement, combining a half share of "posted prices" and royalties was agreed by the IPC¹⁰. Negotiations were complicated by the fact that individual members of the IPC favoured differing pricing strategies. The CFP, for whom Iraqi crude was at the core of its activities, favoured a lower posted price. It was opposed to incorporating amortisation of exploration and other costs favoured by majors, for whom Iraqi supplies just one element in complex financial dossiers within

¹⁰ Penrose, E. & E.F. Iraq; international relations and national development, E. Benn, London, 1978, pp.157-160. In France, details were published by the La Documentation Française, Documents sur le pétrole de l'Iraq, 5.11.52.

which higher Iraqi costs could be offset against activities elsewhere ¹¹. The 1952 deal was thus exceedingly complex, offering ample scope for criticism by diverse and competing political currents in Iraq.

By the mid-50s oil was central to criticisms of the monarchy and its advisors as support for Nasserism and pan-Arabism increased throughout the Middle East. In Iraq this prompted calls for nationalisation, targeting in particular the French share of the IPC, due to France's involvement not just in the Suez invasion, but also the Algerian war. Nationalisation of French shares in the IPC had already been raised in the early 50s after Mossadeq's move in neighbouring Iran, and became a persistent theme in the nationalisation debate. In February 1958, 34 Iraqi MPs submitted a motion to parliament, which proposed nationalising the French share in IPC, an effect of both Suez and war in Algeria ¹².

Despite the evident effervescence of Iraqi domestic politics, the head of CFP, Victor de Metz, thought nationalisation of the company's shares in IPC unlikely. When addressing the IPC board in February 1958 he nevertheless stressed the linkages between wider French policy in Algeria and economic interests in the Mashreq ¹³. The change of regime in Baghdad in July 1958 had little immediate impact on the IPC. No doubt mindful that the bulk of its revenues depended on the IPC, the new government assured the company that it would be allowed to continue operating. Nevertheless Qassem's administration did gradually elaborate a more radical stance vis-à-vis the IPC; demands included access to unexploited oil fields under national control, a revision of the posted price arrangement and direct participation in IPC, citing again the original 20% of shares notionally reserved for Iraq in the original San Remo agreement. These were made clear to Herridge, then the head of the IPC visiting Baghdad a month after the revolution. CFP's De Metz argued within the group for the restitution of unexploited fields as a concession to Iraq's demands. Indeed in November the IPC agreed it could relinquish claims over 50% of these fields,

¹¹ Penrose, 1978, fn. 6, p. 161.

¹² On the possibility of the nationalisation of IPC following events in Iran in 1951; Agence France Press, *Les pétroles d'Irak seront-ils nationalisés?* 31.3.51. "La nationalisation de la part françaises..?", *Le Monde*, 12.2.58.

¹³ Catta, 1990, p.204.

but rejected Iraqi claims to participate in the capital of the IPC, under article 8 of the original, 1920 San Remo treaty. These points became the subject of protracted negotiations between IPC and Iraqi government over next three years. Although calls for the nationalisation of the French stake in IPC did not entirely disappear, CFP was reassured by Qassem's statement in April 1959 that "the nationalisation of French interests is not on the revolutionary government's agenda". This did not stop regular reports that France was to be singled out due to its policy in Algeria ¹⁴. Although Metz appeared confident that nationalisation of only the French share was both legally impossible and politically unlikely, he nevertheless stressed to French authorities that broader considerations of French Middle Eastern policy, which inevitably prompted anti-French sentiment which Arab governments could not ignore ¹⁵. Neither de Metz nor the CFP's permanent representative to the IPC, Jean Duroc-Danner, minimised the overall threat to the IPC by Qassem, who, under pressure from an array of domestic critics was viewed as a volatile negotiating partner. Talks continued to be episodic, Iraq upping the stakes in October 1959 by a 12-fold increase in port charges at Basra. Aggravated government : IPC negotiations in August 1960, notably over which areas would be returned to Iraq, were now to become enmeshed, and would thus remain for 12 years, with international issues. Faced with falling global oil prices posted by companies, from which their national revenues were derived, the oil exporting states of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran and Venezuela met in Baghdad in mid-September 1960 to form the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, OPEC. The impact of the international politics of oil supply and price upon the Iraqi negotiations was reinforced by Qassem's appointment in August 1960 of Dr Salman, who then also became head of OPEC's petroleum office, as Iraqi oil minister, although Qassem himself dominated negotiations with the IPC. When Herridge returned to Baghdad to reopen negotiations in March 1961, Qassem's increasingly beleaguered domestic political position had prompted a more strident set of demands. He now insisted on the deduction of "dead rents"; money paid up front during exploration and at the time deducted from the price of oil, and urged the suspension of all exploration until differences were resolved. In June 1961 he further upped the stakes; making the

¹⁴ "Seule la part française de l'Iraq Petroleum serait nationalisée" *Combat*, Paris, 10.4.59, and "les remous autour du pétrole d'Irak", *Combat*, Paris, 11.4.59.

resumption of negotiation conditional upon the IPCs acceptance of 20% Iraqi participation, increased taxes and control over posted prices. In July 1961 the IPC told the Iraqis they were willing to concede 75% of concessions and stop deducting dead rents from revenues paid to the government. By this time negotiations were further complicated by Iraq's claims over Kuwait, generating strains within OPEC.

After the failure of the eleventh hour, abortive negotiations between Fisher of Standard Oil and Qassem, on December 11 1961 the Iraqi government issued its "law 80". This brought the unproductive negotiations to an abrupt close, and established the framework for antagonistic IPC-Iraqi relations for the coming decade. Law 80 removed 99.5% of the concessions originally attributed to the IPC, leaving the companies just 1900km². In doing so, Qassem removed around 1000km² of concessions already explored by IPC partners notably areas of North Rumailia, which had already yielded promising discoveries. For France and the CFP, the move had potentially far more serious implications than for the other IPC partners. Although CFP had diversified its activities elsewhere in the fifties, Iraq remained its primary market. For France, imports from Iraq represented around 20% of total oil imports and Qassem's confiscation of oil exploration concessions in October 1961 prompted consternation in France ¹⁶.

Yet for the CFP and its president the crisis of 1961 also offered new possibilities. Evidently CFP supported its IPC partners in demanding arbitration over the seized concessions. Negotiations over this were to drag on for the next eight years. However, during 1962 CFP head Victor de Metz saw possibilities of supporting and working with Iraqis in pushing for higher IPC production. Law 80 also opened up the possibility of the CFP negotiating with Iraq over exploration of domains withdrawn from the IPC, but which nevertheless required exploring. This was something that the Iraqi government, which still lacked its own national oil company or infrastructure, was unlikely to be able to achieve without external assistance.

¹⁵ Catta, 1990, p.209.

¹⁶ "Kasem peut-il priver la France de pétrole?" La Croix, Paris, 15.10.61.

Yet during 1962 the CFP worked hard to convince its IPC partners; Mobil, Esso and Shell, that the conflict over concessions and law 80 should not be allowed to derail existing plans for the expansion of oil output; which stood at 46m tonnes in 1961 with an expansion to 67m tonnes planned in 1962. Although the issue of Basra port fees was still a problem in the south, de Metz feared that any cutback in IPC output would both personally enrage and politically compromise Qassem. CFP chairman de Metz appears to have been behind an attempt to get a senior non-IPC figure, from either the World Bank or the US State Department, to go to Iraq to try and reason with Qassem and restore relations. This attempt failed, as Qassem's administration weakened in late 1962 and ties with the outside world, including with Arab League states and the United States deteriorated due to Iraq's claim over Kuwait in June 1961. Qassem was overthrown and executed by fellow officers on 8 February 1963 - 14 Ramadan, as opposed to the 14 July of 1958 when he came to power.

4 1963; diplomatic relations restored

The removal of Qassem by fellow officers, led by Abd al-Salam Aref and Baathists on February 9 1963 came at a crucial moment for France and the CFP. Since late 1962 French diplomats had been negotiating the restoration of diplomatic ties, in line with de Gaulle's policy of re-opening formal relations with Arab states after the end of the war in Algeria , as discussed in chapter two.

In December 1962 a delegation of French academics were received with great pomp in Baghdad, ostensibly to participate in a celebration of the work of the Arab philosopher Al-Kandi. The group included leading archaeologists and the noted orientatlist Jacques Berque. Berque's allocution on Arab philosophy, delivered in Arabic and broadcast on radio and television appears to have greatly impressed both Qassem and Iraqis generally. For Berque it was the start of a life-long involvement in Franco-Iraqi relations which continued to his death in 1995 ¹⁷. The same week foreign minister Hashim Jawad

¹⁷ "le général ... universitaires français", *Le Monde*, 14.12.62. See also Jacques Berque's posthumous collection, *Une cause jamais perdue*, Albin Michel, 1998, pp.258-263. On Berque and Chévenement, and

presented a paper to the cabinet proposing Iraq re-open relations with France. In addition to the ending of war in Algeria and France's own wish to restore relations, his proposal cited "a profound change in France's attitudes to the Arab cause", francophone African states criticism of Israel and France's non-recognition of Kuwait. Jawad's proposal also stated that "the French shareholders of oil companies operating in Iraq do not share the same attitude as other shareholders; a fact which could be advantageous for Iraq"¹⁸. The full significance of this observation would develop only gradually over the next five years.

The Iraqi cabinet formally restored relations on December 12 1962. As the two states prepared to exchange diplomats, in January 1963 delegations of businessmen and French journalists also visited Baghdad¹⁹. Qassem received the latter at length on the evening of February 4. Qassem was overthrown just five days later. The account by Le Monde's correspondent Edouard Saab provides a remarkable, prescient insight into the state of mind of the president in his final days²⁰. Qassem was unstinting in his praise of France, "entre nous et les peuple français il existe des liens que rien n'aurait dû alterer, même pas la guerre d'Algerie". Saab was probably the first to highlight a series of factors which, over the coming decades, would become the guiding principles of Franco-Iraqi relations. Thus suspicion of Anglo-American designs in the Middle East, French and de Gaulle's support for nationalism, and the apparent correspondence between French and Iraqi philosophies, echoing Berque's lectures two months earlier, were all cited²¹

The abrupt change of government did not derail the rapprochement. Although the temporary suspension of physical and communication links between Baghdad, Damascus and Beirut initially delayed negotiations. Fearing Nasserists may have seized power, the Syrian government closed its borders. Only when it was clear that Baathists were associated with Aref did Michel Aflak arrive, discretely, in Baghdad²². The swift

the Association des Amis de Jacques Berque see footnote 5 in the epilogue, and <http://www.multimania.com/aajb/accueil.htm>

¹⁸ "M. Jawad parle en faveur de la reprise des relations avec la France", Le Monde 18.12.62.

¹⁹ Une mission économique est attendue à Baghdad, Le Monde, 25.1.62.

²⁰ "Le général Qassem...", interview, Le Monde 5.2.63.

²¹ Entre la France et l'Irak c'est le coup de foudre, Le Monde, 6.2.63.

²² Iraqi-Syrian relations are beyond the scope of this work, although the Cairo-Damascus-Baghdad

resumption of Iraqi-Syrian relations allowed France's ambassador in Damascus to complete negotiations with his Iraqi counterpart, smoothing the way for the new French *chargé d'affaires*, M. Pol Le Gourrierec, to arrive in Baghdad in late February. In September 1963 France reopened its embassy, appointing M. Jacques Dumarçay as its first, post-Suez ambassador²³.

5 The emergence of a distinctly French approach to Iraqi oil

The overthrow of Qassem did not prompt the reversal of Law 80. It did however lead to a series of more flexible administrations in which civilians played a more prominent role and with whom French oil representatives were able to negotiate. CFP representatives established good relations with the ministers of finance and petrol, Ibrahim Kubba and Abdul Aziz al-Wattari. The statement of Qassem's foreign minister that France's attitude to Iraqi oil differed from other shareholders in the IPC was to be realized during this period. Qassem's demise did not end the internecine struggles within civilian and military elites. Nine months after the Baathists seized power, they were replaced by Abdul Salam Aref in November 1963. Aref made extensive use of civilian and technocratic administrations. The ensuing years of exceedingly convoluted negotiations revolved around four issues. Firstly arbitration over Law 80 itself, secondly the overall level of production, and thus revenues, from the IPC fields already in production and thirdly the formula for revenue sharing. The fourth, more complex, long-term issue was potential negotiations with Iraq over how the concessions confiscated under Law 80 might eventually be developed if and when the IPC accepted it could not reclaim them. The CFP and France were able to differentiate themselves from the other IPC partners on all four of these issues. In particular the fourth allowed France the greatest potential leeway to expand its domestic oil industry via its involvement in Iraq.

It was clear that if the Iraqi government did retain control of those concessions, given that it still lacked its own national oil company or infrastructure, it would require external

triangle provided the framework in which French policy had to operate. See also Amin, S. *Irak et Syrie, 1960-1980*, Editions de Minuit, Paris, c1982?

assistance. Thus in the event of negotiation and arbitration *not* leading to the IPC recovering the concessions there would be new opportunities for foreign companies to invest in Iraqi oil under different terms. Thus tension between western solidarity *within* the IPC *against* the Iraqi government and cooperation *with* the same Iraqi authorities in developing their oil industry, was the key source of contradiction during the period 1963-73.

In these negotiations, the 1962 [?] observations of Qassem's oil minister quoted above - that French interests were different from other IPC shareholders - were to become increasingly important. This was particularly true on two of the four issues outlined above; the need to maximise current output, and its willingness to cooperate with Iraq in developing the oil fields nationalised under Qassem's law 80.

The US and Anglo-Dutch members of IPC, Mobil, Shell and BP had ample reserves elsewhere. They thus favoured reducing production as a tactic in order to try and force the Iraqis to arbitration over law 80 as part of a confrontational strategy. They also feared that concessions to the Iraqis would weaken their position vis-a-vis other producing governments. The CFP, for whom Iraqi crude remained its prime source of supply, favoured compromise and accommodation with the Iraqi government. In this it was partially supported by Shell ²⁴. The CFP therefore had a common interest with Iraq in wanting to maximize output while negotiations continued over Law 80 and other outstanding issues. The Iraqis were acutely aware of this. From 1963 they viewed the CFP as favoured partners within the IPC. This had two effects. Firstly CFP shook-off its "sleeping partner" role and played a pro-active role in negotiations. Indeed from 1963 the CFP's delegate to the IPC, Jean Duroc-Danner, became the lead negotiator in IPC:Iraqi negotiations, something that the other IPC majors reluctantly accepted simply because the Frenchman obtained results. Secondly closer cooperation with the CFP - coupled with the restoration of diplomatic ties - allowed for a gradual broadening of the French presence in Iraq.

²³ Reprise des relations diplomatiques... J-F Chauvel, Le Figaro, 20.2.63.

²⁴ Penrose, 1978, p.387.

Following Qassem's overthrow in February 1963, the new minister of petrol Wattari, and a senior official, Okeili (later to become the first director of the national oil company) requested a meeting with Victor de Metz and Jean Duroc-Danner. They specifically requested that CFP assist in reaching a compromise with the whole of the IPC. Shortly afterwards Duroc-Danner's successful resolving of the problem of port fees at Basra boosted CFP's standing within the IPC ²⁵. This in turn meant that Duroc-Danner, who had forged excellent personal and professional ties with Wattari in particular, played the lead role over the subsequent two years in hammering out a compromise agreement over law 80.

Meanwhile both the national, and international politics of oil were evolving. After estrangement from OPEC (and the Arab League) following Qassem's attempt to annex Kuwait at its independence in June 1961, in December 1964 Iraq under Aref resumed a role within OPEC at its fifth meeting. In February 1964 Iraq had created the Iraq National Oil Company (INOC), denying this was in preparation for nationalisation, but making clear that INOC could develop North Rumaila and other law 80 concessions.

In July 1965, under Wattari and Duroc-Danners' stewardship, an outline agreement was reached between the IPC and the Iraqi authorities. This gave Iraq, via the newly created INOC, a 30% stake in a new company, the Baghdad Oil Company in which the IPC members also held stakes, which would develop the areas nationalised in 1961. However, in July 1965 a change of government derailed the agreement resulting in a further two years of stalemate. The 1965 agreement in part fell victim to shifts within Iraqi politics, in which government oil revenues, and control over national resources were key issues ²⁶. The Yahya government fell, and oil minister Wattari was replaced; the deal initialed just a few weeks later, thus becoming moribund under the new al-Bazzaz administrations. Political uncertainty was compounded as the presidency itself changed following the death of Abdul Salem Aref and his replacement by his brother Abdul Rahman Aref in August

²⁵ Péan, Sérini 1982, p.104.

²⁶ Penrose, 1978, p.389.

1966.

This stalling of the Duroc Danner:Wattari IPC agreement, from which CFP hoped to emerge with considerable credit from both the Iraqis and its partners in the IPC, coupled with the suspension of oil deliveries due to dispute with Syria from September 1966 put considerable pressure on the CFP ²⁷. By early 1967 such problems were compounded by the fact that the Italian oil group, ENI, were reportedly negotiating with INOC to develop the North Rumailia field, the most lucrative part of the disputed concessions confiscated under Law 80 of 1961.

During this period the CFP established a broader Middle Eastern presence, entering into agreements elsewhere in the Gulf, including Iran and the Emirates. As was the case in Iraq, it was initially the sole French presence in such territories. As such it acted as catalyst for those few people, be they academics or politicians, with a stake in increasing the French presence in Arab East. This link was formalised by the fact that Vincent Labouret, an official from the Quai d'Orsay, was seconded to CFP specifically to assist Victor de Metz on international issues. From 1965 onwards the CFP also funded scholarships for Middle Eastern students in Paris; creating the *Centre d'accueil des etudiants du proche orient* which at the time became a focal point for Middle Eastern students and Arabs in Paris ²⁸.

6 The impact of the June '67 war on oil policy

Chapter two demonstrated the degree to which the stance of the French government, in this case clearly de Gaulle in a personal capacity, over the war of June 1967 abruptly altered perceptions of French diplomacy both at home and in the corridors of Arab and Western governments. June 1967 equally marked a watershed in French energy and oil policy. It added a more explicit and compelling linkage between France's general diplomatic "re-invention" of Arab policy underway since 1962, and the needs of domestic energy

²⁷ Catta, 1992, p.458-60. Penrose, 1978, p.392.

²⁸ Catta, 1992, p.457. Interview with Vincent Labouret, Paris, 1996. On links between CFP, Rondot, the journal L'Orient, and middle east studies, see Frémaux, J. *Le monde arabe et la sécurité de la France*, PUF, Paris, 1995, pp. 268-71.

policy, most particularly France's dependence upon imported oil.

Within the Middle East, the war of 1967 had two additional effects, both of which France was able to turn to her advantage. For the Arab oil producing states it further marked the radicalisation of policies, with intertwined debates over Palestine, relations with the West and control of oil resources all exacerbating the tensions between and within Arab states. Finally it brought the cold war more firmly into the Middle East, stimulating and accelerating a regional arms race. The period 1967-74 (from the June 1967 war to the death of Pompidou) sees the interweaving of these three concerns; Arab politics, oil exports and arms imports, into a moderately coherent, albeit oft-criticised, framework of French Arab Policy. Although gestating since 1962, the contours of this policy became clearly discernible in the intense months between June 1967 and the visit of General Aref to Paris in February 1968.

From the Iraqi perspective, the June 1967 war acted as a catalyst in French energy policy towards Iraq and the Middle East in two ways. Firstly it spurred Iraqi plans to control their own oil reserves via their national oil company, hardening attitudes to the stalled IPC negotiations and making a compromise agreement over Law 80 unacceptable. Secondly, it therefore meant that Iraq had to seek non-IPC partners in oil development. In practice this opened opportunities for companies from both France and the Soviet Union.

Any hopes that the Wattari-IPC agreement might be implemented were irrevocably dashed by the war, which prompted the Iraqi government to take a series of measures. The most important of these was Law 97 of 16 August 1967 which awarded the state oil company INOC exclusive rights over the concessions expropriated in 1961 under Law 80. This meant that in practice the IPC would and could not re-gain control of North Rumailia, (although it would be another six years before the legal wrangling over this came to an end). Shortly afterwards, Law 123 decisively restructured the INOC with a view to enabling it to independently take control of exploration and production. Simultaneously, Adib al-Jadir was appointed as INOC head in a restructuring which meant that oil officials who had painstakingly negotiated the Wattari compromise deal with Duroc-Danner and the

IPC were demoted. This occurred against a background of acute hostility to the US and UK due to their support for Israel in the war, tarring the "Anglo-Saxon" majority within IPC ever more firmly with anti-Zionist rhetoric.

It was in this respect that De Gaulle's critical stance towards Israel became so crucial. By decisively sanctioning Israel, in such marked contrast to all other western powers, France, and thus her oil companies and other commercial interests in Iraq and in the Middle East, emerged with an extraordinarily enhanced credibility. Although CFP was de jure and de facto an integral part of the IPC, the likelihood of it acting independently from the other IPC partners was considerably boosted after June 1967. Thus the singularity of the CFP within the IPC stable, a notion which had been fostered during the arduous Duroc-Danner:Wattari negotiations, was heightened in 1967, as war exacerbated the national fault lines in the IPC edifice. Thus over the subsequent eight months, it was assumed that companies from either France or the Soviet Union were the best placed to develop oil and other commercial relations in conjunction with the INOC.

Thus the war had a contradictory impact upon the CFP. Law 97, effectively ending the debate over Rumailia, shook the IPC, further widening the cracks between its multi-national components, providing more space for the CFP to go it alone and consolidate the special bilateral relationship between Iraq and France nurtured by Wattari and Duroc-Danner. Yet in the short-term the suspension of oil deliveries and disruption to transport facilities due to the closure of the Suez Canal caused the company grave concern. However, a month after hostilities Victor de Metz was already looking forward; just as the fall of Qassem in 1963 had been seized by the CFP as an opportunity, so de Metz tried to steer a path through the watershed of June 1967, hoping it would act either as a catalyst for the resolution of the IPC:Iraq dispute in its entirety, or open the way for a new strategy for the CFP acting alone²⁹.

7 Intra-French competition, CFP versus ERAP/Elf

The opportunity and possibility of the latter strategy emerged clearly in late August 1967, two weeks after the passing of Law 97. The Iraqi authorities approached Paris, via its ambassador in Baghdad, Pierre Gorse, asking the government to nominate a French company with which Iraq could discuss the future development of Iraqi oil. It would be natural at this point to assume (as, presumably, did the Iraqi authorities) that in initiating such an approach, that the French government would nominate the CFP to assume such a role, not least because the CFP was already present in Baghdad and its personnel well-known to Iraqi officials.

In fact the CFP office in Baghdad was not told directly of the approach. Instead the ambassador passed the request directly to the Quai d'Orsay. While the Quai and foreign minister Couve de Murville were generally well disposed to the CFP, the message then went to the President. De Gaulle himself, whether due to capriciousness or clairvoyance remains unclear, decided to throw his weight, and that of the French state, behind, not the CFP, but that of its principal rival, the recently amalgamated, state-owned oil company ERAP/Elf.

De Gaulle was open to the views of the leading figures in ERAP, Pierre Guillaumat and Jean Blanchard, who argued in particular that if France failed to act decisively, the Italian state oil interest ENI, would enter Iraq. Franco-ENI rivalry was acute due to the Italian's apparent support for the FLN in Algeria - where the main French oil interests were run by ERAP. Despite the enthusiasm and influence of Guillaumat, there were nevertheless voices of caution in ERAP, largely due to reserves about nature of Aref regime in Baghdad. Couve de Murville, de Gaulle's foreign minister was also opposed to favouring ERAP. Yet de Gaulle perceived that CFP "was British", and as such too closely aligned to IPC and oil majors. He therefore decided that while CFP would continue to attempt to protect French oil interests within IPC, ERAP would operate in competition³⁰. Once this decision was made, the Quai d'Orsay nevertheless immediately sent two officials to Baghdad in order to clarify that that CFP could also submit a bid. Thus in October 1967

²⁹ Catta, 1990, p.463.

³⁰ Péan, Sérini, 1982, p.108.

Iraqi oil officials were faced with two rival French bids to work with INOC in the areas taken from IPC in 1961; one from ERAP, one from the CFP acting independently of the IPC.

Before examining the outcome of this convoluted initiative, we should ask why de Gaulle chose this strategy. Three factors weighed; two French one Iraqi. Firstly if ERAP's bid was successful, it would greatly strengthen the company, which was under pressure in Algeria. Secondly it would irritate the "Anglo-Saxon" IPC. Thirdly, de Gaulle and his officials also calculated, correctly as it turned out, that it would be easier for Iraq to strike a deal with a company which was independent of IPC, thus avoiding the necessity of linking the new, post June 67 developments with a settlement of the IPC dispute over Law 80.

To fully understand this logic requires a brief explanation of the origins and nature of ERAP and the rivalry between what became the two French oil giants, as well as the personalised nature of this rivalry. As explained in chapter one, CFP was from its inception a private company in which the state had a controlling stake. However, ERAP (which, confusingly, became known as Elf during this period) was a very different creature, being entirely state-owned as a result of the consolidation in the mid-sixties of the state's disparate initiatives at oil exploration throughout the Empire during the Fourth Republic. The *Bureau de recherches de pétrole* (BRP), had been created in October 1945, to liaise with and coordinate existing companies, notably SNPA, and Rap (SN Repal.), and the *Union générales des pétroles* (UGP). This move was aimed to put an end to the struggles both between French groups, which were mostly small and lacked both research and production economies of scale, and with the foreign majors within France. Research for petrol in French territories, notably Africa (Gabon) and the Maghreb. By the early sixties these companies were cooperating with CFP, notably in Algeria, (CFP Repal) and then from January 1963 in the North Sea. ERAP was born formally in 1 January 1966, as the *Entreprise de recherches et d'activités pétrolières* (ERAP), as a fusion of BRP and RAP³¹. This was put under the control of key Gaullist Pierre Guillaumat. André Giraud was then at the head of Dica. Guillaumat had himself appointed Giraud when both were in

the *Institut Français des pétroles* (IFP) in the 1950s. The professional background of these two men, as those of the several key technocrats around them, overlapped considerably. They shared an education in the elite schools of mines as well as Gaullist political persuasions. Guillaumat had headed the state's nuclear energy and arms body, the *Commissariat à l'énergie atomique* CEA in the 1960s, before becoming briefly de Gaulle's minister of defense. Giraud was appointed to head the CEA in the 1970s and then the ministry of industry. Thus both men would have extensive dealings with Franco-Iraqi ties in the seventies. Giraud would again be involved in Iraqi issues in 1986-88 as Jacques Chirac's *cohabitationiste* defense minister. Competition between French oil companies over access to Iraqi oil therefore had both personal and broader French oil policy dimensions. The personal aspect was the acute rivalry between Guillaumat and de Metz, itself reflecting the myriad of competing interests at the summit of French oil policy in the late sixties. The broader context was that of diversifying France's oil supplies. If Elf could get their hands on Iraq oil, perhaps as a foothold to Rumailia, it would reverse its growing weakness in Algeria, where it was clear that from 1965 the authorities wanted to establish national control over oil and gas.

While the state backed the ERAP bid in Iraq, it was assumed that CFP would also apply. This was correct, CFP to the grand damn of the other IPC partners, quickly mounted its own, individual bid, thus rupturing inter-IPC solidarity. CFP now openly broke from the IPC consensus, tabling its own bid for North Rumailia in October 1967. A CFP delegation left for Baghdad in early October 1967. This was headed by Vincent Labouret, seconded to the company by the Quai d'Orsay, and CFP's financial director, François Berbigier. The mission was accompanied by André Giraud, the *directeur de carbons* (DICA) in the ministry of industry. This CFP team left Paris on October 16. Yet the ERAP team arrived just four days later,

Fifteen years later, Duroc-Danner, remained convinced that if ERAP hadn't charged in, a resolution of the IPC dossier would have been possible. In retrospect it seems that the issue was mismanaged by Olivier Guichard, de Gaulle's minister of industry. In particular

³¹ Péan, 1982, p.108.

he misjudged the acute personal and professional rivalry between Guillaumat and de Metz. Guillaumat was clear that it was the backing of de Gaulle which was decisive, having convinced the General that the CFP was compromised, both in Iraqi eyes and in terms of Gaullist foreign policy, by its association with the "Anglo-Saxon" IPC. Guillaumat was one of the few to go on record about the incident: "we would have never been able to enter ... Iraq. The CFP was English and we raised the French flag in Baghdad for the first time"³².

"In Iraq it was ERAP which was chosen by the French government, in fact by the presidency, while foreign affairs wanted to leave the CFP to act alone in order to avoid conflict with Great Britain. The general was happy to use ERAP to irritate the British and have two French groups competing in the Middle East. Victor de Metz took this as heresy"³³.

In the end, de Metz's attempt to promote a CFP bid separately from the IPC failed. ERAP initialed an agreement with INOC on November 23 1967, covering a joint exploration and production agreement for a concession of 11,000km². However, this did not include North Rumailia. Significantly, the agreement was a "service contract", in principle a partnership between Iraq and a foreign partner, rather than a "concession". It was modeled on a similar service contract that ERAP/Elf had earlier signed with the Iranian government³⁴. The deal was widely hailed, in Iraq and elsewhere in the Arab world as a significant breakthrough in the struggle between the producer nations and foreign companies. Iraq's prime minister Tahir Yahya declared it "an important step towards breaking the monopoly of foreign oil companies operating in Iraq"³⁵, its significance was that it marked a break with the agreements at that time operating between Arab oil producers and the oil majors, being regarded as both far more beneficial for national governments than the old concession system, and as a step towards state sovereignty over the oil industry.

³² Péan, 1982, pp. 72-75.

³³ Catta, 1990, p.464.

³⁴ De Gaulle's attitude towards Iran, which he did visit, requires some investigation. See Faith S. L'Iran et de Gaulle, Universités, Paris, 1999.

³⁵ L'Aurore, 5.2.68.

The INOC:ERAP agreements was thus part of Iraq's rapidly evolving national policy. The following month, in December 1967, an agreement was outlined with the Soviet Union which greatly boosted INOC's activities. In April 1968 INOC announced that it would alone develop North Rumailia. It now appears that the Iraqi authorities never had any serious intention of negotiating over Rumailia. Rather the Iraqi authorities wanted a preferential tie with a western country prior to confronting the IPC. Jader also suggested to Duroc-Danner that in fact Iraq only sought to keep open the negotiations over Rumailia until after the visit of General Aref to Paris in February 1968 ³⁶. However, this sits uneasily with the impression Duroc-Danner gave Péan that an IPC:Iraq deal was possible had not de Gaulle backed ERAP.

At the end of 1967 it appeared that both French and Iraqi governments had benefited from the deal. The French state, in the shape of Elf, had established a foot-hold in Iraq, outwitting its main commercial rivals in the shape of the Anglo-Saxon oil giants. From Elf's point of view they also appeared to have secured supply of oil (despite the rivalry between ERAP and CFP, ERAP had obtained CFP/IPC surveys of the areas, and thus knew that the availability of ample supplies of cheap, good quality crude oil appeared a near certainty. Many in Iraq's oil establishment were also aware of this, and the sharing of insider information between the (ostensibly rival) French companies would be a source of polemic in years to come.

8 Increased bilateral contacts prior to General Aref's trip to France

The INCO-Elf contract initialed in November 1967 was formally ratified by the Iraqi cabinet on February 4, just three days prior to Aref's trip to France. The agreement was signed in Baghdad by Jean Blanchard, vice president of ERAP/Elf, Pierre Guillaumat's number two ³⁷. The context of state visit of the Iraqi president, General Abdul Rahman Aref to Paris in early February 1968, thus contained four key components;

³⁶ Catta, 1990, fn 7 p.470.

³⁷ While Guillaumat continued at Elf, two months later Blanchard became head of the *délégation générale pour l'armement* (DGA), Péan, 1982, p.131.

- de Gaulle's criticism of Israel in June 1967,
- the euphoric reception of this stance among Arab states,
- the Iraqi authorities' convoluted oil negotiations with both Elf, CFP and Soviet interests between August 1967 and spring 1968, and
- Iraq's desire to acquire arms after the Arab defeat of June 1967.

From the French perspective, Aref's visit was clearly intended to crown France's post June 67 prestige in the Arab world. Receiving the Iraqi president would hopefully consolidate the series of bilateral ties and visits by Arab dignitaries over the previous five years (see chapter 2). The trip thus was both a practical manifestation of France's revived Arab policy, and an opportunity for more detailed negotiations over oil and other commercial deals France hoped to sign with Iraq. It was to be the first of three such visits of Iraqi leaders, Saddam Hussein, (although still not technically head of state), making similar trips in 1972 and 1975 (see chapter 4, section 4 and chapter 5, section 6).

However, despite the symbolism invested in the 1968 Aref trip by both Iraqi and French governments, the visit triggered significant protests in France, and produced few of the immediate, tangible benefits anticipated by the French authorities.

Bilateral ties intensified markedly during late 1967. In addition to the ERAP/Elf negotiations and the commercial credits, an Iraqi military delegation visited Paris in December 1967. This was headed by the deputy chief of staff, Hassan Sabri. It was this visit which triggered the initial speculation that Baghdad was negotiating to purchase Dassault's Mirage III. Such speculation intensified during Aref's trip two months later. As such it became inextricably intertwined with the hostility of the French press and public to the Middle East arms embargo De Gaulle had declared against all front line states, but targeting Israel in particular, in June 1967. On November 7 foreign minister Couve de Murville reiterated that the embargo would be maintained. However, by the time Hassan Sabri's Iraqi delegation arrived a month later, the position had clearly shifted. The embargo was modified to exclude only arms with "clear offensive characteristics",

generally interpreted as attack aircraft ³⁸. The government let it be known, albeit indirectly via *agence france presse*, that it was intent on diversifying its arms sales policy in the Middle East. It declared that it no longer wanted to be in what it termed an "exclusive alliance" with Israel, implying that it was preferable that Iraq be equipped with Mirages rather than Migs. This "better French than red" justification would be used repeatedly in the early seventies to justify new arms sales to Arab clients. It is from this period that members of the powerful *Délégation générale pour l'armement* (DGA) began to visit Baghdad. A French military delegation also visited Baghdad in mid-January 1968, with negotiations continuing on artillery and armed vehicle sales, with a deal on artillery being initialed by the head of the DGA's international section, General Bonte, in April ³⁹.

Such visits received scant attention in the press and the government was clearly concerned over adverse publicity. A subsequent deal to sell Mirage planes to Libya concluded early in the Pompidou presidency (see chapter 4) would be concluded in almost complete secrecy.

Even the minimal publicity accorded the contacts with Iraq inevitably exacerbated the general hostility towards the embargo and potential arms deals with Arab countries in the French press. Not surprisingly, several reports alleged that the same Mirages embargoed for Israel would be sold to Iraq. Sabri's visit and the possibility of arms sales to Iraq also prompted protests from Iraqi Kurds, and Iran ⁴⁰.

Again, it should be noted that Franco-Iraqi ties were just one element of the drive towards sales in the Middle East. Also in December 1967 De Gaulle received Youssef Zouayen, the head of the Syrian government, and possible deals with Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon were evoked in the press. At this date, alongside Israel, only Lebanon had actually purchased French weaponry in the Middle East. However, Dassault had agreed to sell Pakistan 24 Mirage III in early 1966.

³⁸ France Soir, 8.12.67, Le Monde, 9.12.67, International Herald Tribune, 8.12.67.

³⁹ Le Monde, 18.1.68.

The Elf deal of November 1967, and ongoing discussions on arms sales were not the only facets of the new relationship. Paris had already agreed to provide trade credits of FF225m to Baghdad as part of a wider commercial accord signed on June 25 1967 in Paris during the visit of the minister for planning, Yacub Al Saidi. Just prior to Aref's visit, Iraq announced that it would open a cultural centre in Paris, headed by the Iraqi representative to UNESCO. This consolidated the cultural accord signed by France in Baghdad early in 1966. It was only during preparations for Aref's visit to Paris in 1968 that it emerged that the Iraqi foreign minister Pachachi had visited Paris privately during early 1966, during which he had held private meeting with de Gaulle and his foreign minister Couve de Murville ⁴¹.

9 Aref in Paris; February 1968

In the new year of 1968, General Aref's impending trip to Paris was presented by both governments as representing an important milestone in bilateral relations. However, before narrating Aref's trip, it is important to note that the Iraqi authorities already viewed their evolving policies towards both France and the Soviet Union as being closely inter-linked. This was true both in terms of Iraq's specific oil policy requirements and general foreign policy aims. Indeed the extent to which Iraqi leaders explicitly linked, and counter-balanced their ties with France and the Soviet Union, dates from this period. The counter-balancing of Iraq's ties with France on the one hand, and the Soviet Union on the other, was further complicated by deep divisions within Iraqi oil and government circles over the stance to take with each power. However, the extent of Soviet-Iraqi oil cooperation only become evident after Aref's visit to France, indeed, as suggested above, it may have been that the announcement of what later emerged as the Soviet-Iraqi oil agreement of April 1968 was deliberately delayed until after Aref's Paris trip. This Franco-Soviet linkage was to be an equally pertinent policy issue in the months prior to the simultaneous nationalisation of Iraqi oil and Saddam Hussein's visit to Paris in June 1972 (examined in more detail in chapter 4).

⁴⁰ Combat, 12.12.67.

⁴¹ La Nation, 7.2.68

Undoubtedly Aref also saw closer ties with France, hailed throughout the Arab world as its lone western ally, since June 1967, as boosting his own status within the wider Arab world. Thus speaking to French journalists in Baghdad in December, Aref set the broad themes and tone of the speeches he would present in Paris; "contrary to the US and Britain, who continue to interfere in the affairs of Arab countries, France has no ambitions of colonialism or economic domination ... this is why Iraq in particular is increasingly interested in extensive cooperation with her." He also denied that the oil and arms deals were in any way linked ⁴². Addressing a French military delegation who were in Baghdad the week before he left for Paris, Aref stated; "the attitude of general de Gaulle towards Arab problems, his respect for sovereignty and rejection of all foreign domination have provided the solid foundations for the establishment of good relations between our two countries. The position taken concerning the Zionist aggression has prompted the profound respect of the government and people of Iraq, both for De Gaulle personally, and his government " ⁴³. These themes were to be repeated, by both Iraqi and French presidents, during Aref's four day trip. The symbolic resonance of the trip was evidently echoed in the Arab press coverage, and was deliberately played up by Aref and his entourage during his stopovers in Cairo both en-route to, and from, Paris ⁴⁴.

Aref his wife and an entourage of 30 arrived in Nice on February 6. The next day he was met at Orly in the driving rain by De Gaulle himself, his prime minister George Pompidou, and the armed forces minister Pierre Messmer. The rank of this reception reflected the pomp, expense and symbolism that the French invested in the visit. The programme included three tête-à-tête discussions with De Gaulle himself, gala dinners at the L'Elysée, the Quai d'Orsay and the Hotel de Ville, as well as a visit to the *Institut français du pétrole* (IFP), where 15 Iraqis had been undergoing training since 1965. For much of the visit

⁴² Paris-Presse, 12.12.67

⁴³ Le Monde, 25.1.68.

⁴⁴ Al-Ahram (Cairo), quoted in Le Monde, 13.2.68. David Hirst encapsulated English-language press coverage noting that the trip marked "the consummation of a Franco-Arab entente", Guardian, Manchester, 7.2.68. Nick Herbert for the Times in Beirut echoes the view of "De Gaulle's recent performance in the Middle East [as] a sort of super confidence trick whereby the Arabs are supposed to have been lulled into forgetting French aid to Israel so that both sides can cynically engage in sharp practice at the expense of

Aref was accompanied by the minister of industry, Olivier Guichard, the man responsible six months earlier for implementing De Gaulle's decision to promote ERAP/Elf rather than the CFP in Iraq. In addition there were the inevitable stopovers at the Opera, tomb of the unknown soldier and Versailles.

From the evidence available, discussions appear to have focussed equally on the post-June 1967 geo-strategic problems of the Middle East and bilateral Franco-Iraqi relations. The brief communiqué, drafted on February 10 only after considerable disagreement, was predictably long on pledges of fraternal cooperation and short on details ⁴⁵. The two presidents' keynote speeches focussed primarily on the Israeli-Arab conflict, although both men noted the potential for increased bilateral ties, only De Gaulle mentioned the ERAP/Elf deal, adding that "a lot more could yet be achieved" in the oil sector by direct discussion ⁴⁶. Yet despite a prolonged discussion in the L'Elysée on February 9, no contracts were signed and the final communiqué made no mention of progress on either oil or arms dossiers.

The visit triggered substantial press interest in France. Press reports focussed primarily on the possibility of arms sales and more substantial oil sector cooperation in the wake of the Elf deal. In the run-up to the visit, the possibility of ERAP/Elf also gaining a major contract for sulfur production at al-Mishraq, south of Mosul, was widely envisaged ⁴⁷. Given the overwhelming hostility to the possibility of arms sales to Arab states manifested in the French press at the time, several people with existing connections to Iraq attempted to present the positive side of such contacts. Pierre Rondot (an influential colonial administrator who headed CHEAM) attempted to simultaneously justify Iraqi trade and reassure Israeli and Kurdish critics of such ties. Pierre Rossi, who like Rondot had longstanding Iraq and CFP ties, also wrote of the commercial potential, noting that such ties could only be developed over the long-term ⁴⁸. However, such articles were largely

Anglo-Saxons" Times, London 7.2.68.

⁴⁵ Le Monde 11-12.2.99, Texte officiels in, Articles et documents, Paris, 1.3.68.

⁴⁶ Le Monde, 9.2.68.

⁴⁷ Nothing came of this, Iraq developed el-Mishraq itself, with Soviet assistance.

⁴⁸ Le problème de la livraison d'armes à l'Irak, La Croix, 11-12.2.68.

overshadowed by those expressing indignation at the ferocity of Aref's attack on Israel, notably the denunciation of what he termed "cowardly Zionist aggression" during his speech at the Hotel de Ville. In many respects such reporting represented a continuation of the hostile press coverage of De Gaulle's attitude towards Israel which he had stirred up the previous November (see chapter 2, section 7).

Despite the lack of contracts signed, one press article of the time suggested, not without ambiguity, that Aref's trip to Paris had nevertheless had the effect of opening up the Arab world's commercial "door of dreams" to France ⁴⁹. While the trip appears significant, what did it in fact achieve? Indeed one could ask what purpose do any such trips serve? On the oil front little appears to have been achieved. Despite the fanfare surrounding ERAP/Elf's deal, ceremoniously ratified on the eve of Aref's departure for France, and the jingoistic speculation in the French press about commercial benefits, there is no evidence that the Iraqis seriously considered that Elf or CFP might participate in the development of the North Rumailia field. During Aref's trip, the one journalist to interview Aref directly did push him on the likelihood of preferential treatment for French oil interests. Aref replied "of course Franco-Iraqi friendship is a factor taken into consideration in the (*tractations*) negotiations under way" and that "France will be given priority" if the CFP offer (on Rumailia) was of interest ⁵⁰. Yet in April it was announced that INOC itself would develop the field, with assistance from the Soviet Union. Indeed not only did neither French company get a look-in on Rumailia, but, as explained below, Elf's deal of November 1967 soon turned sour.

On arms, the picture was more complex. As explained above, numerous contacts had already taken place between French and Iraqi military delegations. During Aref's trip to Paris, agreement was reached over the delivery of 72 artillery pieces ⁵¹. It also seems clear

⁴⁹ The smiles of Baghdad and Paris..., *Témoignage Chrétien*, 15.2.68.

⁵⁰ Eric Rouleau, *Le Monde*, 10.2.68.

⁵¹ *Le Monde* 13.4.68; this order would comprise 32 Mirage V and 22 Mirage III; 16 version E (ground attack), 4 version B (trainers) and 2 reconnaissance planes. Bonte was at this time head of the international affairs division of the DGA. He was replaced by Huges de l'Estoile in following the January 1969 scandal of Israeli speedboats spirited out of Cherbourg in contravention of the embargo.

that between December 1967 and April 1968 detailed discussions occurred over the sale of up to 54 Mirage aircraft, with a protocol agreement worth a reported FFr620m being signed in Baghdad by General Louis Bonte in mid-April ⁵². The question remains as to what, if any, linkage either party to the agreement had envisaged between the oil and arms dossiers? Did the French pursue the arms negotiations partly because they felt it would enhance the likelihood of a French company getting the Rumailia concession? Or was it the other way around? Is it just coincidence that INOC's decision to develop Rumailia alone was announced almost simultaneously with the French arms deal?

As Aref was about to leave for his final meeting with De Gaulle, *Le Monde's* young correspondent asked him about political liberalisation, Aref answered summarily that this would occur "soon". Five months later Aref was overthrown, casting a further shadow and set of question marks over the achievements of the February 1968 visit.

10 Controversy surrounding the Elf deal and the hiatus of 1969-71

As seen above, the ERAP/Elf "service contract" signed in November 1967 was hailed as a practical and symbolic milestone by both France (denting the Anglo-American cartel in the region) and Iraq (the first foreign agreement with INOC, thus a step towards national control and ownership). Yet paradoxically the agreement very quickly turned sour and within the year was proving to be a hindrance rather than a help to Franco-Iraqi relations. Even before it was signed the deal was controversially enmeshed in Iraq's bitter internal power struggles. Iraq's oil technocrats ousted in August 1967 - those who had negotiated so painstakingly with the IPC to 1965 - contested the terms on which Adib el-Jaber and the new INOC management came to agreement with ERAP/Elf. In particular critics argued Elf already had the geological data on the areas to be explored, (passed to them by the CFP), so knew they were taking very little risk. The deposed head of INOC (Ghanen el-Okeili) vehemently denounced the Elf deal as being detrimental to Iraq's interests in the Lebanese press on 7 January 1968. The suggestion, by Okeili and others at the time, was that the decision had been taken essentially for political reasons by those commonly

⁵² Guillaumat quoted in Péan, 1982, p.112.

termed the "leftist" or Nasserist cliques around al-Jadir. They favored dealing with ERAP/Elf rather than coming to a comprehensive settlement with the IPC, something which may have provided better returns for Iraq and INOC, but required compromise with US interests. The importance of these criticisms was greatly amplified by the overthrow of the Aref government in July 1968. Adib el-Jader and others who had supported the Elf deal were swiftly removed from power amid allegations of corruption, part of which may have been linked to the deal. Meanwhile in April 1968 ERAP/Elf actually began exploration in the 11,000km² area allocated to them under the November 1967 deal. Here, practical problems also arose, notably over the use of Iraqi staff. Then when oil was discovered in the area, known as the Buzurgan field, it proved to be of poor quality. Although Elf continued to work in Iraq throughout the period, these disagreements and distrust between INOC and France continued as negotiation between the post-July 1968 Baathist authorities and the IPC made little progress during 1969-71.

Initial disputes over staffing were exacerbated by various arguments between those in the new government and Elf, notably wrangling over the financial arrangements of the contract. This issue was further complicated by the February 1972 "Tehran agreement" on international oil pricing, which prompted Iraq to try to revise the terms of the Buzurgan contract. By 1971, Pierre Guillaumat, the head of Elf was close to breaking point, suspecting connections between the Iraqi's intransigence over Buzurgan, Elf's mounting problems in Algeria, where they faced nationalisation, and, as ever, deep suspicion of British "machinations" in the Middle East. During 1971 Elf and Guillaumat's Iraqi headaches were reportedly compounded by their lobbying of, and reliance upon, vice-president Ammache, who was subsequently removed from power ⁵³. As Iraq campaigned openly against Elf in early 1972, yet again, the specific political conjuncture of late 1967 in which the deal was negotiated was cited as being at the root of the problem. Publicising Iraq's differences with Elf in *L'Orient du Jour*, published in Beirut, Abdullah-al Sayyab, INOC technical director, stated that "the non-oil considerations of an emotional and psychological nature which influenced the conclusion of our agreement with ERAP, in that General de Gaulle had just come out in support of the Arab cause

against Israeli aggression of June 1967". Iraq also denounced the Elf service agreement in adverts placed in the Beirut press, blaming the problems on "French imperialist and Zionists".

Despite both contractual and practical problems with Elf, it should be stressed that on coming to power, the new government did not have a specifically different set of foreign or oil policies, from its predecessor. On July 27 1968 the new foreign minister, Nasser El-Hani stated that "Iraq wishes to further develop its excellent relations with France", praising de Gaulle's policy in words identical to those used by Aref five months earlier ⁵⁴.

The same was true in Franco-Iraqi relations more generally. The foundations, in terms of both dossiers and personalities, laid before and during Aref's visit to France, were inevitably shaken by the change of power in Baghdad. More importantly, they were also hit by the crises of mid-1968 in France, and the eventual replacement of De Gaulle by Pompidou in mid-1969. Relations with Iraq went through a hiatus due to deadlock over both CFP/IPC negotiations and Elf's problems. For Pompidou it was the related issues of a huge arms deal with Libya, and the ongoing Arab-Israeli arms embargo which caused problems. While the Franco-Iraqi ties which had developed since 1967 attracted a good deal of publicity, much of it negative, in Paris, relations with Libya were conducted almost entirely in silence. Following the change of government in Libya in 1969, France and Dassault negotiated what was then by far France's largest single arms export deal, to supply Libya with 110 Mirage (III and V) planes. News of this deal, worth around \$400m reportedly tied to oil supplies, emerged only in very partial form during 1970. Pompidou's foreign minister Maurice Schuman justified the deal on the grounds that it was better than allowing the Soviet Union to arm a key Mediterranean power ⁵⁵.

⁵³ Guilaumat, quoted in Péan, 1982, p.112.

⁵⁴ Le Monde, 27.7.67.

⁵⁵ Kolodziej, 1987, p.345. France's ambassador to Libya at the time, Guy Gegory makes little reference to the arms deal in his memoirs of the period. *Le Berger des Syrtes*, Flammarion, Paris, 1996. During the crisis of summer 1981, Gregory was ambassador to Iran, see chapter 6. Although largely beyond the scope of this text, insights into the background of French personalities behind Franco-Libyan links and the role Libya played in France's embryonic Mediterranean policy are provided in chapter 5, section 5.

The Pompidou administration soon became ensnared in the contradictory heritage of De Gaulle's policy towards Israel. Twelve speedboats had been ordered by Israel prior to the June 1967 war; now completed, they were moored in the northern port of Cherbourg. These armored boats clearly fell within the enlarged terms of the embargo as decreed by De Gaulle in January 1969. Yet at Christmas 1969 five of these boats slipped out of Cherbourg and headed for Israel. In the subsequent maelstrom of allegation and contradictory reports, it soon emerged that senior figures in the French administration had actively connived with Israel to enable the boats to escape. The Cherbourg scandal clearly shook Pompidou's administration and is an important episode in the broader evolution of Franco-Israeli ties narrated in chapter 2. It also had lasting impact on France's policies of arms exports and controls. Armed Forces minister Michel Debré sacked Louis Bonte from the international section of the DGA, reinforcing its role in promoting foreign sales.

An irony of the Cherbourg scandal was that as the impounded Israeli boats escaped, alongside them on the quayside was the second shipload of artillery and ammunition ordered by Iraq in late 1967. Two hundred tons of weaponry on the ship 14-Ramadan left Cherbourg on January 4, press reports noting that it was the second such shipment to Iraq in three months, and that similar arms cargoes had recently left for Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Libya. Libyan naval vessels had also collected armaments from Cherbourg in May 1969⁵⁶. The numerous visits of Arab delegations to Paris from the mid-sixties onwards chronicled in chapter 2 were clearly being translated into arms orders.

Military ties thus continued to be developed with Iraq as with other Arab States during 1969-71. In June 1969 Hamad Shibab, a member of Iraq's ruling Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) led a military delegation to the French aeronautical and arms fairs at Bourget and Satory. Delegation to these crucial fairs would be a fixture of the calendar of Franco-Iraq relations for the next 20 years. In 1969 Shibab reportedly made little progress on the stalled negotiations over the 54 Mirages, but brought a gift for De Gaulle "in

⁵⁶ International Herald Tribune, 5.1.70, Le Monde, 8.1.70.

recognition of his honorable attitude towards Arab problems" ⁵⁷. In terms of bilateral Franco-Iraqi relations new, more senior ambassadors were appointed by both countries. Mohamed Sadiq al-Machath was appointed ambassador to Paris in early 1969. He immediately had to deal with widespread protests in Paris at the hanging of Jews in Baghdad in January 1969. Protests in Paris over this became inextricably linked to pro-Israeli anger over De Gaulle's decision to reinforce the arms embargo against Israel. This followed Israel's destruction of Lebanese (Middle East Airlines) civilian aircraft on the tarmac in Beirut. Following news of the hanging of Iraqi Jews 1500 people protested outside the Iraqi embassy, then based in Neuilly ⁵⁸. Thus from the start al-Machath began to invest energy in broader public relations and attempt to counter what he and his successors regarded as undue Israeli influence on the French press. By late 1969, he was apparently much concerned that Pompidou might water down De Gaulle's support for the Arab cause in general, and Iraq in particular ⁵⁹. Nevertheless, cultural cooperation outlined in 1967/68 was implemented, notably via Arabic and French scholarships, and plans for a Franco-Iraqi archeology institute ⁶⁰. In early 1970 France appointed a new, more senior ambassador to Iraq, Pierre Cerles replacing Pierre Gorse. Cerles and his network of colleagues in both the French state and private sector would play a crucial role in fostering closer relations with Baghdad in the 1970s.

11 Conclusion, the consolidation of ties 1968-72.

Viewed in retrospect, Aref's trip appeared to achieve little, no contracts were signed, it did not head off the controversy surrounding the Elf contact, and Aref and his government were removed from power five months later. However, it should be noted in retrospect that it was the highpoint of Arab policy *for de Gaulle himself*. The events of May 68 meant not only that de Gaulle never made the trip to Baghdad, but the notion of *grandeur* and vision with which the revived Arab policy had been framed was irrevocably tarnished.

⁵⁷ Le Monde, 5.6.69.

⁵⁸ Le Monde 30.1.69. Embassy was at 3 r. Pierret, Neuilly. Under al-Machath it moved to 24 r. de Berri, 8e, thereafter 47 Avn George IV?.

⁵⁹ L'Express, 10.11.69, Le Monde 7.11.69.

⁶⁰ Le Monde 28.4.69.

It would, for the reasons given in the previous section, be easy to suppose that bilateral relations faltered somewhat after 1968. However, even if the *bilan* of the Aref's trip was far from unambiguous, and subsequent progress was only piecemeal, it did bring into the open the basic foundations of French-Arab policy elaborated over the subsequent decade. As already indicated in chapter 2, this was not simply opportunistic use of de Gaulle's June 67 criticisms of Israel. Rather it rested on the application of wider policy objectives established from the mid-sixties onwards. These were primarily to expand the sources of France's oil supplies and, via a heightened political and diplomatic presence in the Middle East to increase French commercial penetration of Arab markets for both civilian and military goods. Increased arms sales in the Middle East would both offset the cost of oil imports, and help subsidize the rising research and development costs of France's own aeronautical industry. Gaullist ministers and advisors demonstrated a fairly far-sighted determination to achieve this. This policy was pursued regardless of obstacles and short-term policy set-backs, notably volatility of domestic politics in states such as Iraq, and opposition at home, particularly from pro-Israeli lobbies. Equally, broader geo-strategic concerns such as the acute irritation of US and British governments and oil companies, or commercial rivalry with the Soviet Union, notably in the oil sector, were not allowed to derail the policy.

During Aref's visit in February 1968, *Le Monde* attempted to evaluate the balance sheet of French policy in the Middle East. Its editorial correctly highlighted that in terms of arms sales France appeared ready to step in to counter the Soviet Union, and that obstacles to the policy would be shrugged off by Paris;

“The irritation evident in Washington or Moscow, the protests of Israelis and Kurdish nationalists ... henceforth would appear to be seen in Paris as secondary effects of *une grande politique* ⁶¹”.

Viewed in a longer-term perspective, Aref's trip was thus a catalyst and a visible manifestation of the beginning of a denser web of bilateral ties. In the Franco-Iraq context,

such visits would continue virtually uninterrupted over the next 25 years. They took the form both of formal trips (of ministers, technical advisors, businessmen) to Paris and Baghdad, and involved a myriad of individuals whose influence in later years would be considerable. Thus André Giraud, then head of the *direction des hydrocarbures* (Dica) in the ministry of industry, accompanied the ill-fated CFP delegation to Baghdad in October 1967; de Gaulle apparently clearly defining his mission within the French:Anglo-Saxon struggle over oil ⁶². Giraud would himself have far more to do with Iraq as minister of industry in the 1970s and then ministry of defense in 1986-88. Nicholas Lang, a businessman was in September 1968 working for Georges Albertini, a political advisor to the merchant bank Worms, also central to the dossier. Albertini was close to key French politicians in both fourth and fifth republics and Lang would become a crucial link between Baghdad and French politicians, including Georges Pompidou and then later Jacques Chirac. As explained, Pierre Guillaumat's involvement with Iraq was established in 1967 via Elf's bid for Buzurgan. His deputy, Jean Blanchard, moved in early 1968 to head French arms sales within the DGA. The CFP, via its head, Victor De Metz, and its foreign office advisor Vincent Labouret both became ever closer involved in Iraqi affairs at this time. Meanwhile in 1968 in Beirut, Paul Depis, who had a hitherto undistinguished foreign office career, was given a free hand to learn Arabic and immerse himself in Arab politics. The ties he made with Iraqi Baathists in exile in Lebanon would prove invaluable when he became number two in the French embassy in Baghdad under Pierre Cerles. The role of Lang and those with an interest in communist world reinforced with the nomination of a new ambassador to Iraq by Pompidou in 1970, Pierre Cerles. Cerles already had extensive experience of China and Russia. He spoke Russian and would be crucial in ensuring France a special place in an Iraq eager to simultaneously maintain both close relations with, and critical distance from the Soviet Union. This fitted with Pompidou's foreign policy vision and practice. From 1969 de Gaulle's successor was to adapt France's foreign policy framework, adopting a more mercantile stance, particularly in relation to France's role in the economic and energy crisis of early 70s.

⁶¹ Le Monde, 8.2.68.

⁶² Péan, 1982, p.33.

This chapter has sought to trace the Iraqi roots of this wider Arab policy. The following chapter examines the manner in which these roots were nurtured so that Iraq became a central element in French energy policy from 1972. Both the links and adaptation of policy towards Iraq during 1967-72 were to bear fruit during the nationalisation of Iraqi oil in June 1972. With France's privileged position thus established, this then became a central element of France's overall Middle Eastern policy which was to be more decisively honed by Michel Jobert, Pompidou's last foreign minister during 1973/74 as France promoted arms sales and oil contracts throughout the Gulf, providing a commercial springboard for the rest of the seventies. Chapter four will examine Iraq's own foreign policy stance and then oil policy to 1972. Chapter five will then examine post-1972 French policy towards the region.

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Chapter 4. Iraqi foreign policy and the nationalisation of Iraqi oil, June 1972

vc

- 1 The context of Iraq's foreign policy in the 1970s
- 2 Iraq's relations with the Soviet Union
- 3 The nationalisation of Iraqi oil and the Soviet Union
- 4 French policy and the watershed of June 1972; Saddam Hussein's first visit to
in Paris

Chapter 4. France, Iraqi foreign policy and the nationalisation of Iraqi oil, June 1972

1 The context of Iraq's foreign policy in the 1970s

Viewed from Baghdad, the contours of the Franco-Iraqi relationship as they evolved in the 1970s can only be understood within the overall goals and constraints of Iraqi foreign policy. At the end of chapter three, it was noted that the Baathists who came to power in July 1968 did not differ significantly from their predecessors in their attitude towards France and oil negotiations. In 1968 in the closely linked domains of oil and foreign policy, the Baathists' goals were not fully formed. The oil issue dominated both foreign and domestic politics, as the state's revenues, and thus its capacity both to provide services and resist opposition, still depended largely on revenues from oil. With Iraqi oil production by the INOC still in its infancy, the struggle with the IPC was to dominate policy until 1972. As such, it continued to shape relations with the western powers, including France as it had done under Qassim and both Aref administrations.

It is both artificial and analytically impossible to convincingly disentangle the pressures and impulses upon domestic policy from those upon foreign policy. Nor, in the foreign policy domain can the influence of factors related to oil be divorced from broader foreign policy consideration. In their political-economy based survey of Iraq's international relations E. and E.F. Penrose cogently point out that a domestic:foreign policy dichotomy in the Iraqi case is patently false. More importantly, they stress that key dates in domestic oil policy were closely linked to regional and international oil diplomacy, in which successive Iraqi governments played a key role.

“[But] the coincidence between the significant dates in the progressive assumption by Iraq of control over her own oil industry and the significant dates in the general evolution of events affecting oil in the Middle East is no chance coincidence:

- Law 80 of 1961 followed close in the formation of OPEC in 1960;
- Laws 97 and 123 of 1967 were passed in an atmosphere conditioned by the Israeli war and OPEC militancy, which culminated in the OPEC "declaratory statement" in 1968;

- the nationalisation of the IPC in June 1972 followed the successful OPEC discussion on participation in March, and the conclusion of the OPEC participation agreement at the end of 1972 paved the way of the IPC settlement in February 1973;

- finally the timing of the large increase in prices for Iraqi oil and the consequent increase in revenues in 1973 and 1974 was determined by the October war of 1973.

In other words, for the most part the practical success of actions by Iraq had a hand, but in which this hand was not decisive.”¹

Elaborating on this catagorisation slightly, in order to try and evaluate how the Franco-Iraqi relationship fitted within the broader context of Iraqi policy, we can identify five distinct spheres of Iraqi foreign policy in the 1970s.

- 1 *The relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy.*

For Iraq in the seventies this was particularly relevant both in the context of regional affairs, due to the Kurdish issue, and that of the cold war, due to the strength of the Iraqi Communist Party.

- 2 *Iraq's standing in the Arab world.* Iraq consistently took a rejectionist stance over Palestine, staking its claim to leadership of the Arab world on this stance once president Sadat of Egypt broke with the Soviet Union and embarked on a separate peace with Israel, culminating in the Camp David process.

- 3 *Control over domestic oil resources and international oil developments;* producer vs. consumers via OPEC and OAPEC.

- 4 *Relations with the West,* which at least until the early 1970s were largely conditioned by the oil issue. Nevertheless, two other factors counted; US support for Israel in the Arab-Israeli conflict, most particularly during and after the crisis of October 1973, and broader cold-war considerations of superpower involvement in the Middle East.

- 5 Clearly sphere four was thus closely linked *to Iraq's relations with the Soviet Union.*

¹ Penrose, E & E.F. Iraq: international relations and national development, London, E. Benn, 1978, p.422.

In terms of the first sphere, (domestic:foreign relations), Kurdish uprisings sapped central government and provided scope for destabilisation by neighbouring states. This was most obviously the case with Iran. Iran's involvement was predicated not only on its own large Kurdish population, but also on the spiritual affinity between Iranian and Iraqi Shia. Although beyond the scope of this study, the period 1970-73 in Iraqi politics was marked by a fraught liberalisation of domestic politics as the Baath party sought to simultaneously coerce and co-opt other domestic Iraqi political currents. An initial rapprochement with Kurds in 1970 was followed in late 1971 by the notion of a national pact. After closer relations were established with the Soviet Union following Saddam Hussein's trip to Moscow and in February 1972, and Kosygin's visit to Baghdad in April, two communist party members were brought into the government. This relatively (certainly to the post-1978 period) pluralist phase of domestic politics culminated in the 1973 "National Front". The linkage between Kurdish and Communist participation in the government, and Iraqi-Soviet relations, was further complicated by the fact that much of the ICP leadership was also Kurdish.

The issue of the relationship between Iraq's domestic and foreign policies at this time raises a secondary issue as to what degree the actual foreign policy choices made within the RCC, particularly in the key year of 1972, were the product of an internal policy dialogue and decision making process. It cannot be assumed either that there was natural policy unanimity over key decisions (notably the treaty with the Soviet Union in April 1972, or nationalisation of the IPC in June 1972), or that the ascendant Saddam Hussein simply dictated policies within the RCC. In retrospect the decisions taken during 1972 appear to be cogent, far-sighted and ultimately successful, and are customarily credited almost entirely to Saddam Hussein. However, such a view is largely the product of a retrospective reading of Iraqi history. At the time the decisions, and their potential for success, were contested within the RCC, and the precise form they took were the product of internal political compromise².

In terms of the Franco-Iraqi relationship, the first sphere (the relationship between Iraqi domestic and foreign policies) had very little impact on the relationship. With the relationship driven by Gaullists and the Baathist hierarchy, the opposition French

² For a partial insight into the arguments surrounding oil nationalisation, see Financial Times,

Communist Party maintained only limited links with Bagdad, while Kurdish and other Iraqi diaspora opponents of the Baath on the whole kept a low profile in Paris ³. In terms of sphere two (Iraq in the Middle East and in relation to the Palestine question), de Gaulle's differentiation of France's stance over the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967 was continued under Pompidou. Despite significant differences in interpretations (notably Iraq's rejection of UN resolution 242) both French and Iraqi leaders made repeated reference to each other's stance on the issue. Both under Pompidou and Giscard, France consistently took a more "progressive" line over Palestine than other western European states, thus reinforcing the image of a pro-Arab policy forged by De Gaulle in 1967 established in chapter 2. As explained below, France under Giscard also was generally critical of the Camp David process.

However, it is in the linkage between spheres three, four and five in which Iraq's cultivation of a special relationship with France was crucial. From mid-1972 onwards, the Franco-Iraqi relationship plays two central roles in Iraqi foreign policy.

- Firstly closer bilateral ties with Paris splits the western block, both in terms of the oil issue (IPC, and Iraq's need to sell, oil after the 1972 nationalisation), and over intra-European and cold-war diplomacy, French reticence effectively preventing the emergence of a coalition of OECD, oil consuming states. The stance taken in 1972 was reinforced during the 1973/74 energy crises, France refusing to join the US-sponsored IEA. In this Franco-Algerian relations were also extremely important.

- Secondly for Iraq, the sharp deepening of trade, financial and diplomatic ties between Paris and Baghdad in the seventies provides a practical counterweight to the influence of the Soviet Union on Iraqi affairs. Political links with France were entirely free from the domestic (Kurdish and Iraqi Communist Party) implications for Baathist rule; supplies of French arms came free of domestic political or regional geo-strategic strings.

9.6.72.

³ The impact that the increasingly assertive (and well financed) Iraqi presence in Paris had upon Arab politics in Paris in the seventies is sadly beyond the scope of this text. For a very partial insight into this issue, see Beau, N. *Paris Capitale Arabe*, Seuil Paris, 1995. Kassir, 1992, also chronicles the impact that Iraq's attitude to the Palestinian issue and the Arab press in Paris had in the 1970s.

2 Relations with the Soviet Union

Unsurprisingly, given the both the importance and the ambiguities surrounding the links between Baghdad and Moscow, there is a body of literature dealing with Iraqi-Soviet relations. However, existing works are somewhat fragmentary and inconclusive about the importance of the relationship, and tend to ignore or downplay the degree to which Iraq consciously counter-balanced relations with the Soviet Union against ties with France ⁴.

The Soviet Union had been interested and involved in Iraq since 1959, when Qassem withdrew from the Baghdad Pact. This interest stemmed from geo-strategic issues, due to Iraq's location and its potential to provide the Soviet Union with a port as well as its oil reserves. The Soviet Union supported Iraq's 1961 claim over Kuwait, but in 1963 was initially wary of the post-Qassem administrations due to their repression of Iraqi communists. Assistance was restored in 1964 as the Soviets endorsed Iraq's anti-western stance. However ties continued to be stymied by both Egyptian-Iraqi rivalry and the internal Communist Party and Kurdish issues. Only after the Arab defeat of June 1967 did relations begin to expand significantly. As noted in chapter two, Soviet technical assistance in the oil sector was initially agreed in late 1967. In an increasingly polarised post-June '67 Middle East, first Aref then, after July 1968, the Baathists sought enhanced military and political support from Moscow. By 1969 the Soviet presence in Iraq was the largest to any third world nation not formally allied to the Soviet Union ⁵. Ties were boosted by similar stances on a range of regional issues, including Sudan, Eritrea and Oman.

From 1967 onwards, the USSR supported Iraqi attempts to take control of their own oil resources. In December 1967, a month after the path-breaking oil service agreement was signed with France's ERAP/Elf, a senior Soviet economic delegation signed a letter of intent in Baghdad committing the USSR to provide substantial technical assistance to INOC in return for bartered oil supplies (see chapter 3, section 9). This became the model for a series of such oil barter deals. Assistance was delayed by the July 1968

⁴ Golan, G. *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, CUP, Cambridge, 1990. Chubin, S. *Security in the Persian Gulf; 4 the role of outside powers*, IISS-Gower, Aldershot, 1982.

⁵ Golan, 1990, p.165.

change of government, but in June 1969 a new series of loans were agreed, with a joint-commission formalising economic cooperation from early 1970 ⁶. Soviet technical assistance and purchases of oil was therefore crucial to the expansion of national production by INOC. Such assistance underpinned the April 1972 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, which provided a far more comprehensive framework for Soviet-Iraqi relations and ushered in what, in retrospective, can be seen as the 1972-75 highpoint in Iraqi:Soviet relations. For the Soviet Union, the agreement meant the scaling-up of oil barter assistance deals in return for a more formal economic and commercial presence in the Gulf. Such cooperation was bolstered by the creation of a Soviet-Iraqi planning committee in June 1973 and further substantial loans five months later.

Yet despite further large Soviet arms supplies to Iraq in 1975, relations were nevertheless tarnished by a series of tensions. Firstly, as already noted, were the inconsistencies and uncertainties over Soviet involvement in Iraq's domestic affairs, via both the ICP and Kurdish factions. Secondly, despite some commonalties, the two state's regional stances were far from identical, with Iraq consistently more rejectionist than Moscow over Palestine, although post-Camp David this inconsistency lessened. Thirdly, and most importantly in so far as Franco-Iraqi ties are concerned, Iraq's leadership was unwilling to be dependent upon the Soviet Union either economically or technologically. Although Iraq welcomed technical assistance in the oil sector, sent the largest number of students to the USSR from any state in the Arab world, and was one of only five third world states to receive nuclear research facilities from Moscow, it nevertheless maintained its right to cooperate equally with non-Comecon states. It was in this latter context that the relationship with France became far more significant in 1972.

3 The nationalisation of Iraqi oil and the Soviet Union

Echoing the first of the five spheres identified at the beginning of this chapter, the catalyst for the changes of 1972, culminating in the nationalisation of most Iraqi oil interests in June, was, as it had been for much of the past decade, stalemate in

⁶ Penrose, 1978, p.426.

negotiations with the IPC. Again emphasizing the links between internal politics and external oil and foreign policy, the break with the IPC was propelled initially by a reconfiguration of domestic politics. In September 1971 power was redistributed within the Baathist RCC. Vice President Ammash and Foreign Minister al-Shaikly were removed, although Ammash became ambassador to Moscow ⁷. Saddam Hussein replaced Ammash not only as vice-president, but also as the head of the all-important committee controlling INOC and Iraq's oil policy. This political change triggered a more urgent, confrontational policy towards the IPC; the Iraqis - in this instance presumably Saddam Hussein as the head of the oil committee - imposing shorter, rigid deadlines on negotiations. A new round of talks began mid-January 1972. Their suspension five days later prompted Saddam Hussein, oil minister Saadoun Hammadi and new foreign minister Abdul Baki, who had led the negotiations with the IPC, to fly to the Soviet Union on February 10. On April 7 a senior Soviet delegation headed by Alexei Kosygin (head of the USSR's council of ministers) arrived in Iraq. A 15 year treaty of friendship was signed on April 9. In a moment of high symbolism, Kosygin simultaneously inaugurated oil production and exports (evidently to the USSR...) from the North Rumailia oil field which had been developed by INOC, with Soviet technical assistance, since early 1968. Later in April the IPC cut production, enraging the Iraqis. On May 17 a further package of points was put to the IPC, with a two week deadline. At the time only the CFP appeared to take seriously the threat of outright nationalisation. However, in retrospect, by May the gulf between the respective Iraqi and IPC positions was so great that both parties seemed to tacitly recognize they were ineluctably engaged on a collision course. In retrospect each seemed to be positioning for *post*-nationalisation, implicitly accepting that nationalisation was inevitable ⁸.

The Iraqi:IPC stand-off was in part conditioned by international factors, notably negotiations over national participation between producers and oil exporters, led by OPEC. As such this can be linked to what was earlier identified as the third sphere of Iraqi policy making; the relationship between control over domestic oil resources and international oil politics. Iraq's leadership had close relations with both Libya and Algeria, both of whom had embarked upon confrontational strategies with western oil interests during 1971. Conversely, French attitudes to Iraq in 1972 were undoubtedly

⁷ He was, briefly in early 1975, ambassador to Paris.

influenced by the fact that both major French oil companies, CFP and ERAP/Elf had been nationalised during 1971 in Algeria. OPEC backed Algerian and Libyan stances, and thus OPEC support for Iraq was also forthcoming in June 1972; OPEC officially supporting Iraq during a meeting of oil ministers in Beirut on June 9. This position of support for Iraq had already been endorsed by Arab oil states meeting previously in Algiers.

It would be easy to assume that the USSR had backed nationalisation. Kosygin's much-publicized cry "Arab petrol for the Arabs", at the inauguration of North Rumailia in April being read as an encouragement to nationalisation, thus emboldening Saddam Hussein for the stand-off in May. However, such a view appears presumptuous in the face of the facts. In both February and April, Moscow reportedly cautioned against full nationalisation. This was also the position of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). The fact that ICP members were brought into the cabinet during May, and that foreign minister Baki was again hastily dispatched to Moscow immediately after the nationalisation was announced, both appear to reflect Baghdad's unease and uncertainty as to the USSR's reactions.

The nationalisation Law 69 of June 1 1972 was greeted with euphoria in Baghdad. Despite the cry of victory, the move was not as comprehensive as it first appeared. While IPC assets and production in the north were nationalised and transferred to a newly created company, the Iraqi Company for Oil Operations (ICOO), stakes in the IPC's southern body, the Basra Petroleum Company (BPC), were not touched by the decision. The Syrian authorities also immediately nationalised IPC assets on their territory; the pipelines and terminal at Banias. The decision to leave the BPC untouched and an immediate, unilateral offer to France that their oil supplies from Iraq would be unaltered were integral elements of Iraq's subsequent negotiating strategy. This aimed to ensure both the future of Iraqi national oil sales and revenues, and a speedy resolution of outstanding litigation and compensation claims from Law 69.

⁸ This is the conclusion of Penrose, 1978, p.416.

"A frantic fortnight in Paris"

The foregoing bland narrative cannot do justice to the chronological congestion of the events of early June for Iraqi, or as we shall see, French actors.. In the space of less than two weeks, Iraq's leadership had nationalised the IPC, while leaving the door open to compensation and negotiation (by not fully nationalising the Basrah and Mosul companies). They had reinforced their cooperation with, and obtained backing from the Soviet Union (Abdul Baki's precipitate visit to Moscow), obtained OPEC and OAPEC backing for the move. The nationalisation strategy was then crowned by tactics which successfully drew France out of any potential western moves to sanction nationalisation. This was achieved by offering Paris special post-nationalisation terms for oil deliveries, thus denting any hopes of united action, either by the IPC members, or western governments. It was in the context of these events, crammed into the space of just three weeks, that Saddam Hussein then arrived in Paris on June 14 1972 for his first formal visit to a West European state.

The degree of physical congestion and chronological confusion among the disparate actors in Paris in the drama of June was considerable. On June 13 behind the Quai d'Orsay's venerable facade the delegates of the four countries whose interests had been nationalised met. Meanwhile across town the CFP officials were beginning discussions with an advance party of INOC personnel which had arrived ahead of Saddam Hussein. Elsewhere in the Quai itself and in other ministries throughout the capital, members of ministerial cabinets were finalising their plans to receive the full Iraqi delegations.

Two days before Saddam Hussein arrived in Paris, the representatives of the interests he had seized met in two separate fora in the French capital. Immediately following the nationalisation decree of June 1st, Britain had called for a special four-power meeting between the governments concerned (USA, UK, Netherlands and France). The French government, then considering the offer of preferential terms for post-nationalisation oil supplies made to them by Baghdad, rejected this. Instead they agreed to the convening of the special "petroleum committee" of the OECD in the margins of a long-scheduled meeting of the 23-member OECD held in Paris on June 12-14 ⁹. Simultaneously in

⁹ This could be seen as an ironic, hollow echo of de Gaulle's continual urging of a four power

Paris, representatives of the four governments with interests in the IPC would then meet separately to discuss Iraq. However, by the time the meeting took place, Iraq and the IPC had accepted the irreversibility of nationalisation and the principle of a mediation role for OPEC.

The full IPC board would eventually meet only on June 19-20 in Paris, fully aware of the special deal which had been struck between France (CFP) and Iraq on Saturday 17th at the end of Saddam's trip. The key decision facing the IPC was how to go about negotiating compensation, it was agreed that the CFP's veteran negotiator Duroc Danner would represent the IPC in such negotiations.

Nadim al-Pachachi (an Iraqi minister prior to 1958, who had become secretary-general of OPEC), had been proposed by OPEC to mediate between Iraq and the IPC at the meeting of OPEC in Beirut. IPC head Geoffrey Stockwell and al-Pachachi had agreed a timetable for negotiations by the end of June. This was to later be extended, but it eventually led to a full settlement of all outstanding claims in late February 1973. It is important to note that the IPC's negotiations were led by the CFP's Duroc Danner, drawing on the good relations established both during the arduous negotiations which culminated in the 1965 Wattari agreement and with the Baathists. Therefore in both the special deal concluded between France and Iraq, *and* in during negotiating the terms of compensation, French officials played a particular role.

4 French policy and the watershed of June 1972; Saddam Hussein in Paris

The importance accorded to relations with France by the Iraqi leadership increased in late 1971. Closer ties with Paris became an integral part of both the more confrontational strategy with the IPC and the desire to foster closer relations with Moscow embarked on after September 1971. It is an important question, to which at present we can have no definitive answer, to what degree this decision to privilege relations with Paris reflected the personal preference of Saddam Hussein. Clearly the elements for such a strategy were in place, the "differentiation" of French interests in the oil sector having been apparent from 1962 onwards (chapter 3). Yet following the

concert on Middle East questions, something the US Britain had always rejected. Ironically, the

ousting of Ammash, Saddam Hussein had a decisive impact upon policy. The interviews he gave before and during his trips to France in both 1972 and 1975 suggest both a specific personal interest and political investment in the decision to foster a closer relationship with French leaders. Exactly when and why Saddam Hussein formulated this "French strategy" is clearly a crucial question to which I have no answer. It is unlikely to have been simply a product of France's post-67 stance. To my knowledge Saddam Hussein had no direct contact with the CFP or other French officials prior to 1968. Interest in France may well have reflected strategies elaborated by others in the Baathist party and Saddam's entourage. Clearly it is of interest and importance to clarify what contact Pierre Cerles (France's ambassador to Iraq from 1970) or Roland Bareille's (CFP's rep in Baghdad) had with who during 1970-71.

In January 1972 French journalists were invited to Baghdad to interview Saddam Hussein as part of the preparations for a trip to Paris by the Iraqi leader, which was initially scheduled for mid-April. In an interview Paul Balta quizzed Saddam Hussein on the significance of the visit ¹⁰ ;

"Given that, as you're no doubt aware, I rarely travel abroad. my visit is particularly important. We really would like not only a close, but an exceptional relationship with France. This is because France's policy is not imperialist; its attitude towards the Arab world and the Palestinian question is different to countries such as the US, Britain or West Germany, with whom we have broken our relations due to their hostility towards us".

Balta then pressed Saddam on the stand-off with Elf; the Iraqi vice-president replying that he felt that the problem could be; "resolved within the framework of our policy of friendship with France, and shouldn't influence overall relations, which we would like to expand and deepen" ¹¹

The ratcheting up of tension with the IPC which occurred two weeks after this interview was published, and Saddam's subsequent rapprochement with the Soviet Union (the February trip to Moscow, Kosygin's arrival and the signing of the

petroleum committee of the OECD had originally been created in the wake of the 1956 Suez crisis.

¹⁰ Balta, alongside Eric Rouleau, wrote on the Middle East for *Le Monde*. In 1973 he wrote the first book attempting to provide an overview of French Arab policy, Balta, P. Rouleau, C. 1973. Interview in Baghdad, 1996.

¹¹ *Le Monde*, 9-10.1.72.

Friendship Treaty in April) both delayed and heightened the importance of Saddam's state visit to Paris, which was now hastily rescheduled for mid-June.

As the showdown with the IPC evolved in late May, the CFP's representative in Baghdad (Roland Bareilles) and the French ambassador, Pierre Cerles, were approached by colleagues from INOC with reassurances that in the, increasingly probable, event of nationalisation of the IPC, French oil supplies would be unharmed. This offer was formalised immediately following the announcement of Law 69 on June 1. In exchange for French acceptance of and cooperation with the *fait accompli* of oil nationalisation, Iraq offered to guarantee the CFP and France oil deliveries equivalent to the CFP's stake in the IPC. This offer immediately became common knowledge in Paris and among CFP's partners in IPC. Yet despite intense diplomatic activity, for a full week following the nationalisation, the French government made no official statement on their reply. This silence augmented the atmosphere of speculation surrounding Paris' stance. In a move which had been scheduled to coincide with Saddam's state-visit to France, a delegation of French businessmen had flown to Baghdad on June 2 to inaugurate the first direct Air France Paris-Baghdad flights. Among them were the heads of two of the new Franco-Arab financial institutions l'Union des banques arabes et françaises, (UBAF) and Banque franco-arabe (BFA)¹². Their presence prompted speculation that the French had offered Iraq credit facilities in the event of the IPC nationalisation triggering an western embargo.

It is impossible to confirm or deny such reports. However, in the weeks prior to nationalisation Iraq removed substantial sums of money from US and UK banks as a precaution against assets being frozen in retaliation for nationalisation of IPC¹³. It is thus probable both that Iraqi assets were transferred to Paris and, at the very least, assurances over the availability of corresponding credits would have come from Paris in late May, early June. Evidently this did not require the presence of such banks' directors in Baghdad, their trip probably being a coincidental by-product of preparations for Saddam Hussein's impending visit to Paris. Over the weekend of June 3-4, there were also rumours, which proved unfounded, that Iraq had requested that the

¹² Le Monde 6.6.72.

¹³ Penrose, 1978, p.409.

visit to Paris be brought forward in order to expedite a bilateral Franco-Iraqi oil agreement.

On June 7, the Wednesday following the nationalisation, the French cabinet formally considered Iraq's offer, conscious that their decision would in large part determine the tenor and outcome of the visit of the Iraqi vice-president to Paris the following week. The same day Iraq's foreign minister Abdul Baki, who had begun an unscheduled trip to the USSR on June 2 (the day after the nationalisation) declared in Moscow that the Soviet Union "supported the initiatives of the Iraqi government to re-establish sovereignty over its natural resources". Baki also announced the formal ratification of the friendship treaty initialed by Kosygin in April. As outlined above, this was a crucial shift in, and statement of, Soviet policy.

France's president Pompidou effectively now faced a choice of doubling or quitting his stake in Iraq. On the one hand Pompidou could accept the hand proffered to him by Iraq, gaining accepting preferential access to Iraqi oil and thus bolstering a specific French policy in Iraq and the Middle East. The alternative was to end French exceptionalism in the region and, as a leading French weekly put it; "simply align himself with western policies" and accept that cold war interests in the Middle East had imposed a sort of "new Yalta of petrol" ¹⁴.

Following the French cabinet meeting of June 7, the government spokesman simply stated that the meeting had considered the dossier from the perspectives of French oil supplies and compensation of French assets. The cabinet had paid "particular attention" to Iraq's specific offer to France, and noted that CFP had already had "useful" discussions in Baghdad on the matter and that an exploratory note had been sent to the Iraqis on June 6. Meanwhile the government stressed that it had declined the British request for a meeting in June 8 in London of all four governments with stakes in the IPC ¹⁵

This remained the formal state of play on June 14 when Saddam Hussein arrived at Orly, accompanied by large delegation of senior officials comprising five ministers and

¹⁴ Le nouvelle observateur, 5.6.72.

other RCC members. These included oil and foreign affairs ministers, and Fakhouri Khadouri who led the group which would discuss the aftermath of oil nationalisation with the CFP and other oil interests in Paris. Two days prior to the arrival of the main delegation, Adnan Qassab, head of INOC, had already opened discussions with French companies; stressing that Iraq was not going to "compensate" for the nationalisation but that she "wished to safeguard and maintain French interests [and] treat French interests in a manner different to those of other countries".

On arrival the Iraqi delegation stated that their aim was to discuss not only the widening of Franco-Iraqi relations but also "the future of French interests in the Arab world". During his address to the banquet offered by the French prime minister on June 15 Saddam Hussein explicitly compared the relationship Iraq now desired with France to that just established with the USSR; "We open our doors to France for the same reasons which prompted us to open them to the Soviet Union [and] all states.. who wish to cooperate with us on an equal footing". Rouleau noted that although formal discourse, actually debate, and that it emerged from the discourse of Saddam that he had the ambition to forge a relationship as "an ally, more than a friend" ¹⁶.

Discussions with the prime minister Jacques Chaban Delmas, foreign minister Maurice Schumann and President Pompidou followed. After Maurice Schumann's discussions with Saddam on June 15, he stated that "within the policy framework of France's friendship with the Arab world in general, there is now a specific Franco-Arab policy" ¹⁷. Three principal issues were discussed during the visit; the Israel-Arab conflict, oil supplies and bilateral trade, and Iraq's differences with Iran. Further financial assistance for Iraq was discussed between Pompidou's finance minister Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, and the Iraqi vice-president. At the core of the discussions, notably on Thursday with President Pompidou, were the precise terms of France's agreement to accept Iraq's offer of preferential access to oil. Wrangling over this, and its linkage to other dossiers, notably enhanced trade relations necessitated extra, unscheduled sessions between Saddam Hussein and both premier Chaban-Delmas and Pompidou.

¹⁵ Le Monde 9.6.72.

¹⁶ Le Monde 16.6.72.

¹⁷ Figaro, 16.2.72.

As ever the Iraqis proved arduous negotiators even, or perhaps particularly, with their new-found "privileged" European partner.

Saddam Hussein left Paris on June 18. Successive rounds of negotiations over four days resulted in a communiqué summarising the series of agreements in three key domains oil, financial and industrial cooperation. Firstly in terms of oil supplies during Saddam's trip Paris fully accepted the offer made to France as the IPC had been nationalised a fortnight earlier. France, via the CFP would continue to receive a share worth 23.75% (i.e. equivalent to its former stake in the IPC) of all oil produced from Kirkuk for a period of ten years. Only France among the four former national shareholders (USA, UK, Holland) struck such a preferential, post-nationalisation agreement. The Iraqi delegation in Paris strongly denied that these supplies were being offered to France at below market prices. However, the door was left open for France to negotiate to purchase more than its original share of Iraqi crude, Iraq being anxious to be able to place as much nationalised oil on the market as possible (Khadouri and the INCO delegation left Paris for Italy, where a supply agreement was agreed with ENI). As the agreement was initialed in Paris, the Iraqi news agency publicized the fact that the first cargo of post-nationalisation oil from Kirkuk was loaded onto a French tanker at Banias.

Secondly the accord provided for a significant expansion of French commercial credits to facilitate industrial development in Iraq by French companies. Cultural cooperation was also reinforced, with reciprocal provisions to expand Arabic and French language training as well as broader scientific and technical cooperation. An educational protocol was subsequently signed in Baghdad in early August 1972. The Iraqi vice-president issued invitations to both President Pompidou and Premier Chaban Delmas to visit Iraq. These were accepted. The communiqué concluded by saying, "the conditions now exist for France and Iraq to embark on a profitable [*fructueuse*] cooperation".

Saddam's June 1972 trip to Paris can be portrayed as a success for both Iraq and France. Paradoxically it can also be seen having been beneficial to the IPC, in that acceptance that nationalisation was inevitable and the closer Franco-Iraqi ties aided settlement of outstanding issues. For all the partners except France, the ongoing discussion with

OPEC about participation in other Gulf countries, most particularly Saudi Arabia, was actually of greater importance than Iraq's nationalisation. In this sense, for the other IPC partners the impetus given to bilateral Franco-Iraqi relations by Saddam Hussein's Paris trip was in fact a useful step. They had no objection to CFP obtaining preferential access to Iraqi oil, internal IPC solidarity no longer being of concern post-nationalisation. Indeed France's privileged position actually assisted the negotiations over compensation for nationalisations and the settlement of outstanding claims. Thus by the end of June the modalities of the negotiations had been settled, with OPEC playing a mediator role between the CFP's Duroc-Danner and the Iraqi authorities. These negotiations were concluded relatively harmoniously eight months later. The agreement of February 1973 formally bringing to an end both the 12 years struggle between Iraq and the IPC initiated by Qassem's Law 80 in 1961, and ending the IPC's 50-year existence.

Chapter 5. France and Iraq, commercial and military ties to 1979.

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- 1 Pompidou's policy framework in the Middle East.
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- 3 Michel Jobert, energy and Arab policies, 1973/74.
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Chapter 5. France and Iraq in the 1970s

1 Pompidou's policy framework in the Middle East

General literature on French foreign policy frequently views Pompidou's tenure as President as a hyphen between de Gaulle and Giscard. This view is both reflected by, and in part due to, the lack of literature on Pompidou's foreign policy. Pompidou, uniquely among Fifth Republic presidents has no collected work on his foreign policy and there is only one generally available monograph in French ¹. Aside from the meager literature, the view of Pompidou's foreign policy as not terribly significant persists for two reasons. The first of these was that Pompidou's presidential term was truncated. Its early years were dominated by the troubled aftermath of May '68 and de Gaulle's enforced retirement after the referendum of April 1969. Its final years were overshadowed by the President's illness. From 1973 onwards the French public were aware that Pompidou was ill, although not of the severity of the illness from which he died on April 2 1974.

Secondly that as de Gaulle's faithful servant, first as his Prime Minister and then presidential successor, Pompidou is regarded as having implemented pre-existing Gaullist policy, rather than modifying or innovating. A typical view is that "he made no attempt as Prime Minister to influence that (foreign and defense) policy and ... did little to change it when he became president" ². Pompidou is thus often regarded as a nightwatchman between De Gaulle and Giscard, overseeing what Hayward terms "the transition from heroic to humdrum Gaullism" ³.

¹ Diallo, T. *La politique étrangère de George Pompidou*, librairie générale de droit, Paris, 1992. Originally a thesis in Paris V., Diallo in large part managed to avoid the pitfalls of science-po / droit thésards and produce a readable work. Michel Jobert was on the jury, hence the convoluted preface. Kolodziej, 1974, remains the standard work in English. Roussel, E. *Pompidou 1911-74*, 2nd edition, J.C.Lattés, Paris, 1994.

² Howorth J. "The president's special role in foreign and defense policy" in, Hayward, J. et al, *De Gaulle to Mitterrand*, Hurst, London, 1993. However, Howorth notes, fn 31 on p.164, that Pierre Messmer, Pompidou's Prime Minister, vigorously disagrees with this analysis. All of Michel Jobert's writings confirm Messmer's view; Pompidou strengthened his convictions and personal prerogatives on foreign policy over the last year of his life he last year of his life.

³ Hayward, J. "From republican sovereign to partisan statesman" in, Hayward, J. et al, *De Gaulle to 93, Mitterrand*, Hurst, 1993, p.26.

Certainly as concerns Franco-Arab relations, this notion of Pompidou as a largely passive interim hiatus is misguided. Pompidou himself developed strong opinions on Middle Eastern policy, and both the overall direction, and individual decisions taken within France's policy towards the Middle East were far more substantive between 1969-74 than under de Gaulle himself. While the initial foundations for subsequent relations with states such as Iraq were laid in the sixties, it was under Pompidou's administrations of the early seventies that policy was elaborated. By the time Valéry Giscard D'Estaing was elected President on May 19 1974, France had a substantial, and rapidly expanding commercial and diplomatic presence in the Middle East. As shall be shown later in the chapter, the Middle East was one of the few areas of foreign policy in which Giscard was to allow his young Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, a certain degree of autonomy. The actual basis of France's commercial and diplomatic presence in the Iraq and the Gulf was thus largely established under Pompidou's presidency. This was most conspicuously so during Michel Jobert's tenure as Foreign Minister between March 1973 and Pompidou's death in April 1974. Yet between Iraq's oil nationalisation in June 1972, and the death of Pompidou 22 months later in April 1974, France's role in the Middle East dramatically changed. France became a commercially aggressive and successful partner of both radical Arab states, such as Libya or Iraq, as well as of Saudi Arabia and the conservative monarchies of the Gulf. How this was achieved in the period will now be examined first through an overview of the issue of Pompidou's attitude to de Gaulle's Arab-Israeli arms embargo and relations with Libya. The text will then examine in more detail how Franco-Arab relations evolved through the efforts of Pompidou's foreign minister for the last 13 months of his presidency, Michel Jobert.

Viewed from a global perspective France's stance in the Middle East between the Arab-Israeli wars of June 1967 and October 1973 appears to be fairly constant. As such, following Kolodziej's analysis, we can identify three factors shaping French policy in the region during Pompidou's presidency ⁴.

- Firstly France's shift in its attitude to the Israel-Arab conflict evident from June '67 onwards which has already been narrated in chapter 2. The embargo of June 1967 marked an end to unlimited arms sales to Israel. By the time the embargo

⁴ Kolodziej, E.A. French international policy under De Gaulle and Pompidou; the politics of grandeur, Ithaca/London, Cornell U.P. 1974, ch.10.

was reinforced in January 1969, arms sales to Arab states were steadily increasing, reflecting this shift in policy.

- Secondly, given the internal rivalries in the Arab world, France had to choose between Arab states. From the early seventies onwards, what had hitherto been disparate policies towards individual states in the Maghreb, Levant and Gulf states, had to be increasingly integrated. This was particularly so given that, despite its nationalisation of French oil interests in 1971, Algeria became more firmly at the centre of France's Mediterranean and Middle Eastern policies, marking a tilt towards more radical states such as post-1969 Libya and Baathist Iraq. Whereas de Gaulle had incorporated his policy towards the Arab world within his approach to the non-aligned world as a whole, under Pompidou this approach was narrowed and repackaged as a specifically "Mediterranean policy", within which Arab states of the Gulf were included. Under Giscard this stance was again reconfigured into a "Euro-Arab dialogue", a notion which originated under Jobert, and then again the broader "North:South" dialogue within the move towards a "new international economic order".

- Thirdly, as noted in chapter 3, the twin incursions of the cold war and regional arms race into the Middle East created both problems and opportunities for French policy in the region. As the US-Israeli axis strengthened, so Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi dependence upon the Soviet Union increased. This had a paradoxical impact upon French policy in the region. Objectively, it narrowed French scope for action.

Kolodziej's analytical framework remains useful in terms of understanding the divergent forces underlying French policy in the region. He suggests that French leaders were forced to "strike a balance" which involved the juggling of four awkwardly contradictory policy objectives: (1) optimizing bilateral ties with as many Arab states as possible, (2) reconciling French and Soviet positions in both the Middle East (notably over the core Israeli/Arab issue) and Europe, while (3) attempting to slow Superpower penetration in the region, and (4) criticising US support for Israel, while depending upon it in Europe. In addition to bilateral initiatives with Arab states, and a hardening of position towards Israel noted below, France did this by flexible attachment to the formula of a Great Power concert over the Middle East; "until the (1973) war, nothing was more constant, nor more subject to change, than the French formula for

peace in the Mediterranean; four power accord among the US, Soviet Union, France and Great Britain”⁵.

Yet while policy undoubtedly did involve the balancing of these factors, the international condition of the Middle East between 1967-73 also offered France an opportunity, both in terms of scope for its own policy initiatives, and in how such initiatives could be justified to its European and American allies; as a way of preventing Soviet encroachment into the region. From the 1968 arms sales to Iraq onwards, but most explicitly in the deal struck with Libya in 1969, arms sales to Arab states were justified in terms of counterbalancing the encroachment of the Soviet Union.

2 Squaring a circle: the Arab-Israeli arms embargo; arms sales to Libya, hostility in and from the US, 1969-73

We have already seen how de Gaulle decreed an embargo on the delivery of offensive weapons to the frontline states (the French formula was *champs de bataille*) during the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967. These states were defined as Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Israel. The real impact of the embargo was overwhelmingly on Israel, although in practice weapons delivery continued throughout late 1967 and 1968, mostly in the form of "spare parts". Following the Israeli raid on Beirut airport in December 1968, de Gaulle tightened the terms of the embargo to include all armaments, including spares and moved to try and close some of the loopholes through which Israel continued to receive French military supplies.

The barbed legacy of this embargo was to dog Pompidou and his ministers throughout the period 1969-74 in two different, but closely linked, ways. Firstly the domestic hostility to the embargo "against Israel" continued to be a major issue in France. Pro-Israeli lobbies in the US meant that it also became a significant factor in French-US relations during the period. Secondly, as France deepened its relations with Arab states, most explicitly Libya, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, in an increasingly polarised and volatile Middle East it became increasingly difficult to justify arms deals with these states, on

⁵ Kolodziej, 1974, p.508.

the basis that such states were not "frontline", rather French arms supplies could be justified in the basis that they prevented increased Soviet penetration into the region.

When he came to power all the indications were that Pompidou would most likely loosen the embargo of January 1969. Maurice Schumann and Jacques Chaban-Delmas, respectively foreign and prime ministers, both were favorable to Israel and critical of de Gaulle's "pro-Arab" policies. However, although a blind eye continued to be turned to some deliveries of arms to Israel, two factors mitigated against an actual change in policy. The first of these was the acute official embarrassment at Israel's coup in illicitly spiriting away its patrol boats from the port of Cherbourg in December 1969. Seven of the 12 patrol boats Israel had ordered in 1965 had been delivered prior to the tightening of the embargo in January 1969. On New Year's eve 1969, the five remaining boats slipped out of Cherbourg, in blatant contravention of the embargo. Subsequent press coverage and an enquiry revealed official connivance, making Pompidou's administration look foolish.

Pompidou's irritation at this incident was greatly enhanced two months later when his official visit to the US was seriously marred by large scale protests by pro-Israeli lobbies against French arms sales to Libya. Despite hostility within his cabinet and entourage, Pompidou had backed swift moves by French emissaries and officials to establish links with the new Libyan administration which seized power on September 1 1969. The President's backing in large part seems to have stemmed both from the sheer scale of the Libyan contract and the fact that Franco-Libyan ties were a key element in his vision of a new "French Mediterranean " policy. The scant available evidence indicates that unofficial French envoys had already cultivated close ties with Gadaffi prior to the overthrow of King Idris in September 1969 ⁶. A young, oil-rich revolutionary regime in the Maghreb which was intent on expelling the "reactionary and imperialist" Anglo-Saxons, while wary of the Soviet Union, was a clear opportunity for post-June 1967 French policy in the region. French archives now show that as quickly as late September 1969 the US was aware that a major arms deal was in the offing between France and Libya; Kissinger, apparently drawing on Israeli intelligence, pressurising foreign minister Schumann to desist from such a policy

because of its ramifications for broader military balance in the Middle East ⁷. Nevertheless, Franco-Libya negotiations over what was an order for 110 Mirages continued in secret during the final quarter of 1969. US failure to block the deal by diplomatic suasion was undoubtedly behind the leaking of the news to the US press on December 19 1968. The news that France, with its enhanced embargo on Israel, was to sell 110 advanced fighter jets to Libya, triggered a storm of protest in France, Israel and the US. Gadaffi had immediately adopted a militantly anti-Israeli, pan-Arab policy. With no pilots of his own, it was widely assumed that the Mirages would be transferred to Egypt. The project of union, ephemeral though it proved, between Egypt, Libya and Syria in April 1971 reinforced such assumptions. France insisted there was a non re-exportation clause in the contract. Given that the pilots trained to fly the Libyan mirages appear to have been largely Egyptian and Pakistani, it is little surprise that this clause was in particular breached in the October 1973 war ⁸.

The publicity surrounding the Libyan deal posed a problem for Pompidou. Schumann had visited Algeria, Tunisia and Libya the previous week. Although Schumann appears to have opposed the deal, the rest of the cabinet eventually backed it ⁹. However, the protests that the deal prompted in the US had significant ramifications for US-French relations. Pompidou was scheduled to tour the US in February 1970. Mindful of the strength of US pro-Israeli lobbies and wary of adverse publicity in the wake of the Libyan contract, key aides, notably Michel Jobert who then headed the presidential office, advised the president to truncate his US tour. Schumann disagreed and Pompidou maintained the original schedule. During the tour, the French president defended the Libyan deal, stressing that France's regional policy was designed to counter the Soviet Union. "For us, situated as we are in Western Europe, at the west of the Mediterranean, our interest, indeed our duty, is to maintain our presence, rather than

⁶ See the paras on Saint-Robert and Benoist-Méchin below. See also Georgy G. Le Berger des Syrtes, Flammarion, Paris, 1996.

⁷ Roussel, E. Georges Pompidou 1911-74, 2nd edition, JC Lattés, 1994, p.344. This second edition of Roussel's classic 1984 biography of Pompidou was considerably updated and revised following access to presidential archives. As such, in historiography terms it can be seen as a companion to the new archival work of Maurice Vaisse on de Gaulle's foreign policy. However, presumably an indication of persistent sensitivities, Roussel was not granted access to archives on the Middle East...

⁸ Kassir, 1992, p.96.

⁹ Roussel, 1994, p.342.

let others install themselves, in these regions." ¹⁰. On February 28 at the Palmer Hotel in Chicago Pompidou and his wife were mobbed and spat at by a hostile crowd several thousand strong. While his distraught wife immediately returned to Paris, a livid Pompidou was placated only by the intervention of Nixon himself. Several key commentators see this incident as hardening both Pompidou's stance on the Israeli-Arab issue, and his conviction that broad Gaullist policy had to resist the *dérive atlantiste*.

3 Michel Jobert, energy and Arab policies, 1973/74.

Michel Jobert was little known outside of French political circles prior to March 1973. His stint as Pompidou's last foreign minister lasted barely a year. Yet during that time Jobert gained a reputation and public profile, both at home and abroad, unsurpassed by any other French Fifth Republic foreign minister. A man who had been a self-effacing and discreet political advisor to Pompidou for many years, became an outspoken and combative minister who played a key role in the evolution of France's relations towards Iraq and other the Arab Gulf States ¹¹.

Jobert's role is significant for this text in two respects. Firstly Jobert was both committed to and energetically promoted a policy which integrated newly established ties to both radical and conservative Arab states within a broader policy framework encompassing arms exports and oil imports. This in turn was linked to foreign policy goals both within Europe and with the United States. Jobert's arrival at the head of the Quai d'Orsay coincided with the arrival of Saudi Arabia's King Feisal in Paris in March 1973. From then until his extensive tour of the Gulf states and Iraq during February 1974, Jobert was more or less continually absorbed by Middle Eastern affairs as the war of October 1973 and subsequent energy crisis became a central issue both in France's dealings with its European allies and the USA. As such Jobert was able to bring to the fore themes he and his close collaborators had been working on since the mid-60s.

Secondly, Jobert's time as foreign minister is significant in terms of both his power and influence vis-à-vis the President and decision making, as well as the reform of French

¹⁰ New York Times 10.2.70, quoted in Frémaux, J, *Le Monde Arabe et la sécurité de la France depuis 58*, PUF, Paris, 1995, p.98.

¹¹ Jobert's role and friendships from the early 60s onwards with virtually all the key actors in

foreign policy machinery. He asserted the prerogatives of the minister and Quai d'Orsay in a way in which none of his predecessors did ¹². This was due to a variety of factors: the close relationship and trust built up over many years between Jobert and Pompidou; the fact of Pompidou's illness; Jobert's commitment to, and specific interpretations and promotion thereof of a particular strand of Gaullist ideas on foreign policy, as well as what emerged as his outspoken and at time irascible character. Although he appeared to strengthen the institution of the Quai d'Orsay as a force in foreign policy making, Jobert's impact stemmed equally from his skill in understanding, using and where necessary subverting, established channels of decision making. As such he made ample use of personal networks of advisors.

Michel Jobert was a key member of Pompidou's ministerial cabinet when the latter was de Gaulle's Prime Minister. When Pompidou became president in May 1969, he appointed Jobert to the key post of secretary-general of the l'Elysée. Jobert, who himself had been born in Morocco, thus became the President's principal advisor on oil and energy issues during 1969-72, negotiating in particular with the Algerian government over the nationalisation of French interests there in 1971 ¹³. He thus already had a substantial involvement in the dossiers of Arab oil and French energy supply which would come to dominate his time as foreign minister from March 1973.

Jobert was himself born in Morocco and thus, more than most of the Gaullists who came through the Algerian war, had a long-standing interest in Maghrebi and Arab affairs. Like Pompidou, Jobert also had an interest in literary affairs and, although a poor orator, was a talented writer. In his memoirs of 1974, and a series of subsequent writings he documented his attitude to and engagement with the Arab world. Much of this is in the tone of self-justification due to the criticism that Jobert came under, following his pronouncements in the wake of the October 1973 war, and his extensive tour of Arab countries in early 1974. The problems with the arms embargo had already been addressed by the administration in mid-1973 during the trip to Paris of the King of Saudi Arabia. Faisal's trip to Paris brought home to French officials the need to

this story requires further examination.

¹² Cohen, S. *La monarchie nucléaire, les coulisses de la politique étrangère sous la Ve république*, Paris, Hachette, 1986, ch.5.

¹³ Ironically, as Jobert subsequently became French foreign minister 1973/74, and served again as a minister in 1981/83 before retiring, his Algerian counterpart in the 1971 nationalisation negotiations,

develop a new Arab policy due to mounting tension in the region ¹⁴. By the time of the visit Pompidou agreed that the embargo should be lifted, 'though this time because of the French state's desire to sell arms to Arab states, rather because of obligations to Israel.

While most western states, and the bulk of the French political class immediately condemned Arab aggression in the war of October 1973, France, in the shape of Michel Jobert, once again took a different tack. Addressing the National Assembly on October 17, Jobert, in a "little phrase" which would dog him for the rest of life, asked rhetorically, *est-ce que tenter de remettre les pieds chez-soi constitue necessairement, forcement une agression imprevue?* ¹⁵. The statement, widely interpreted as a justification of the Egyptian attack, predictably provoked a storm of protest in France and the US and, equally predictably, it was well received in the Arab world, where it was equally noted that Jobert was the sole Western statesman to refer to the war as that of Ramadan, rather than Yom Kippur. Thus what was generally seen as a major gaffe, (or at best an impetuous, unfortunate turn of phrase) at home, in fact further boosted French prestige in the Arab world.

Jobert's visits to and courting of Arab governments in early 1974 can only be understood in the context of both the energy crisis and French attempts to unite their European Community colleagues around a collective European partnership with Arab oil producers. By their nature, both projects went against the thrust of US policy, which favoured close US:EC cooperation within the framework of an energy consumer's organisation. It was this essential incompatibility of visions which was at the core of the much publicised US:Franco, Kissinger:Jobert rivalry between October 1979 and April 1974 which both at the time and in subsequent writings in part defined the framework in which European:US relations and the 1973/74 oil crisis was perceived. Thus from late 1973, as Jobert attempted to forge a common European stance to the energy crisis, he was simultaneously trying to draw in Arab governments to a broader form of Euro-Arab partnership.

Bouteflika, became Algerian president as this text was drafted in 1999.

¹⁴ Weed, M.K. Michel Jobert et la diplomatie française... Paris, eds. F. Lanore, Paris, 1988, p.131.

¹⁵ Weed, 1988, p.134. In his book *Un Autre regard*, B.Grasset, Paris 1974, Jobert claims this statement was made, on Pompidou's orders, to counter the pro-Israeli gloss put on government policy by Pierre Messmer.

Jobert visited Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Syria in mid-January 1974. This was followed by a trip to Baghdad on February 7, while subsequent trips to Libya, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Abu Dhabi were scheduled for March and April. The trip to Baghdad was less concerned with individual French projects than dominated by broader strategic issues. These revolved around two essentially contradictory initiatives; that of the US to convene a conference of energy consumers the following week in Washington DC, and the French proposal for a far broader "Euro-Arab dialogue". These two, essentially contradictory, initiatives happened simultaneously. As European Community foreign and energy ministers had finalised their position on the energy question the previous week in Brussels, a delegation of four Arab League representatives arrived to begin preliminary discussions on a broader framework of Euro-Arab cooperation. This had been largely a French initiative and Jobert used his trip to Iraq to further publicise the form that the nascent Euro-Arab dialogue might take; suggesting a meeting of the foreign ministers of nine EC and 19 Arab League states at some point during 1974. Replying to a French journalist's question as to whether this didn't amount to straightforward US:French rivalry in the Middle East, Jobert replied, "We consider that Europe and France have a practical policy to offer the Middle East" ¹⁶.

Jobert considerably elaborated France's attitude to the Arab world during his trips of early 1974;

"Nous avons, nous aussi, une stratégie dans nos rapports avec le monde arabe et nous pensons que notre coopération doit s'insérer dans une large perspective. Le Proche-Orient et les pays arabes présentent, pour les raisons politiques et économiques, un intérêt majeur pour la France. Ceci n'est pas très nouveau. Le Général de Gaulle avait déjà formulé cette analyse de façon précise et c'est cette politique là que nous suivons. Nous allons plus loin que ce qu'il avait imaginé. Nous venons maintenant jusqu'à vous"

D'autres amènent avec eux des hommes d'affaires... Pour ma part, je ne suis pas venu pour arracher un contrat pétrolier contre des armes, mais pour proposer une politique

¹⁶

Le Monde, 12.2.74.

*délibérée, volontaire et de longue haleine ... Mieux placé, notre pays l'est indiscutablement en Orient arabe. Mais je vous le disais hier, la France a fondé sa politique bien avant la crise de l'énergie, une ligne de conduite s'inspirant à la fois des intérêts généraux du pays et de ses amitiés séculaires"*¹⁷.

Reflecting on his attitude to the Arab states, Jobert insists that he saw Franco-Arab partnership as crucial to France, and Europe's cohesion in the face of the US. He consistently rejected the notion that oil was the prime motivation behind his trips to the Gulf trip¹⁸. Rather he insisted that Arab states were eager to embrace a French representative, and refuted the notions that France had a specifically "pro-Arab" stance at the time.

4 Jobert and the reform of French foreign policy machinery

One of the sub-themes of this thesis is the mechanisms of French policy making process. It is therefore important to note that Michel Jobert's impact upon French foreign policy went well beyond either the abrasive manner in which he honed the Franco-US antagonism, or his promotion of French Arab policy. Rather in his brief tenure as foreign minister, he managed to make significant changes to the mechanisms of foreign policy decision making, as well as the research capabilities of the Quai d'Orsay.

At first glance, this role appears paradoxical. His detractors often accused him of excessive personalisation of decision making, short circuiting established bureaucracies and procedures. In retrospect, Jobert acknowledged that this was true, but defended his actions as having resulted in clearer and more efficient information flows and decision making. It is also clear that his determination to reform a bureaucracy which had been hitherto very much under the shadow of the L'Elysée, restored a degree of autonomy and pride to the foreign office which it had lacked under Schumann.

Institutionally, Jobert's most striking new departure, and lasting achievement, was the creation of the Centre d'analyse et de prevision (CAP) as a think-tank and policy

¹⁷ Weed, 1988, pp.156-157.

formulation unit within, but not entirely of, the Quai d'Orsay. Often portrayed uniquely as Jobert's brainchild, in reality the need for a unit to provide longer-term reflections on foreign policy was recognized a decade earlier. In fact these reforms were part of gradual changes and modernisation occurring under Pompidou,¹⁹.

The idea of creating a "cellule de réflexion" on East:West issues was first suggested by Jean-Bernard Raimond in the early 1960s²⁰. Raimond was a life-long colleague of Jobert's who eventually became foreign minister in 1986. The "cellule" was blocked by Couve de Murville, briefly revived in mid-68, under Michel Debré's premiership, mothballed by Schumann and finally established as the CAP by Jobert²¹. The CAP was put under the charge of Thierry de Montbrial, an expert on energy policy²². Jobert himself had been Pompidou's chief advisor on energy policy. At the time this was seen as empire building by Jobert, and an attempt to by-pass normal channels; leading to the pejorative phrase "Jo-boys", to refer to the team of bright young things headed by Montbrial. However, with time the CAP rapidly became analogous to the research and analysis dept of FCO. It drew on a range of outside specialists from academia and business, some on retainers, some individually commissioned. Although the CAP was Jobert's creation, its primary purpose was to create new ideas. Although initially staffed by Jobert's confidants, papers produced did not necessarily support Jobert/Pompidou ideas in the Middle East. CAP staff were critical of the Arab policy, and generally more Atlanticist than Jobert himself²³. The CAP expanded and had greater influence

¹⁸ Jobert, M & Remilleux, J.-L. *Ni dieu, ni diable*, Albin Michel, Paris, 1993, p. 241-245.

¹⁹ Destremau, B. *Le Quai d'Orsay*, Plon, Paris, 1994, pp318-329.

²⁰ In 1964 Hughes de L'Estoile (a central figure in arms sales to the Arab world in the 190s and 80s, first as international director of the DGA, then as head of international sales of Dassault) created a research centre in the ministry of defense the *centre de prospective et d'évaluation*. De L'Estoile was consulted by de Montbrial in 1973. Schwartzbrod, A. *Le président qui n'aimait pas la guerre*, Plon, Paris, 1995, p.54.

²¹ Cohen, S. *La Monarchie nucléaire; les coulisses de la politique étrangère sous la Vème République*, Hachette, Paris, 1986, p.92-95. Cohen, S. "Prospective et politique étrangère; le CAP", *Revue Française de Science Politique*, No. 6 Dec 82.

²² He was followed at the CAP by Jean-Louis Souviron, Destremau, 1994, p.379.

²³ Schwartzbrod, A. 1995. While this book's main theme is Mitterrand's defense policies, it also contains an exceedingly insightful section on the evolution of policy and academic strategic studies and international relations in France, tracing the way in which individuals from the CAP went on to become the core analysts for French academia, and its aeronautical industry, in the 1980s. Thierry de Montbrial, and Jean-Luc Georgin and their CAP colleagues and successors were the source of a new generation of strategic and IR think tanks in France. De Montbrial left in 1979 to form IFRI. Georgin went to Matra, followed by Francois Heisbourg. In an aside which speaks volumes about the nature of personal links between the core actors in the French oil/arms milieu, Schwartzbrod relates how, in 1974 de Montbrial was called by Pierre Guillaumont (by then head of Elf) and the Chief of Staff of the armed forces about the possibility of defense:CAP liaison. The link man between the two

under Giscard, notably in furthering medium term reflections on North:South and nuclear proliferation issues. Despite fluctuating fortunes and influence on policy in the 1980s under Roland Dumas, the Centre continues to exist and is generally viewed as a counterpart to the UK's Research and Analysis wing of the FCO ²⁴.

As he had demonstrated during his tours of the Middle East in 1973/74 Jobert was particularly keen to integrate external economic promotion and foreign policy. The energy and success of his reforms to foreign commercial policy during his year as foreign minister was in part what inspired François Mitterrand to appoint him as minister for external economic affairs in 1981. Michel Jobert thus became the only French politician to be appointed as a key minister in both Right and Left wing cabinets. Here again, in what was a brief tenure as minister he made a series of changes to policy formulation, notably by creating the *Centre d'Observation et de Prospective* (COP), a commercial equivalent of the Quai's CAP. This body was an attempt to simplify and coordinate the plethora of bodies charged with promoting French overseas trade ²⁵.

5 Legitimising and promoting a French Arab policy; Gaullist writers and lobbies.

The narrative of foreign policy above has made only passing reference to public pressure and debate of the issues of Arab policy. For much of the sixties, apart from the isolated academics and journalists writing on the Middle East, in practice there were no public voices backing a "pro-Arab" stance. What subsequently emerged as such a lobby can only be understood in relation to (indeed as an explicit reaction to) the strength of pro-Israeli opinion and lobbies in France. As already noted, these virtually monopolised press coverage and public interpretation of de Gaulle's stance in June 1967, much to the latter's chagrin. The fact that de Gaulle's intemperate press conference of November 1967 was widely condemned as being anti-Semitic simply reinforced his mistrust. When announcing the total arms embargo in January 1969, de

institutions was an officer called Lanxande, who in the 1980s became chief of staff to Mitterrand, p.58

²⁴ Cohen, S. *Les conseillers du président...* PUF, Paris, 1980. p.197.

²⁵ Weed, 1988, p.218. When Jobert resigned in 1983 there was barely disguised friction between him and the - openly pro-Israeli - Jacques Attali.

Gaulle stated "it is remarkable, and has been noted, that the Israeli influences have made themselves felt close to the information milieux" ²⁶. Primarily for this reason, some senior Gaullists close to the General himself began to organize pro-Arab groupings. Although conceived largely in the context of the Israeli-Arab conflict, in fact these drew in part on pre-existing Franco-Maghrebian ties and sympathies. Although not formally part of policy making, in the 1970s such groupings came to play a significant role, both in publicising and promoting broader Franco-Arab ties in the Middle East, as well as facilitating informal contacts between French and Arab decision makers.

The Association de solidarite franco-arabe ASFA

Primary among these was the *Association de solidarite franco-arabe* (ASFA), formed in May 1967 at the initiative of Louis Terrenoire. Terrenoire was a colleague and former minister of de Gaulle's. Terrenoire chose Lucien Bitterlin to head ASFA. Bitterlin, who was still heading ASFA in the mid-1990s, had distinguished himself as head-strong, courageous anti-OAS militant in Algiers ²⁷. In 1967 he had been administering the association *Algérie-France*, itself founded under the patronage of George Gorce, de Gaulle's minister of information. The only French child in his Algiers school, Bitterlin spoke Arabic; he was one of an eclectic band of French individuals whose support for Algerian nationalism lead to a broader engagement with Arab causes, firstly over Palestine, and then as Franco-Arab relations broadened in the 70s, other issues.²⁸

In origin, ASFA was clearly a Gaullist body, bringing together several noted scholars and activists during late 1967. In its early years it seems to have received discrete

²⁶ Kassir vol 2, p84.

²⁷ Bitterlin, then in his late twenties, had shown near-wreckless courage in the fight against the pro-Algérie française, anti-Gaullist Organisation de l'armée secrète (OAS) in Algiers in 1961. His *Nous Étions tous les terroristes; l'histoire des "barbouzes" contre l'OAS en Algérie*, eds Témoignage chrétien, 1983, is a starkly intense account of the internecine French violence in the final months of Algérie française. Aficionados of the shadier realms of French foreign policy should note that, as his book's subtitle suggests, it was the officially condoned but clandestine actions of Bitterlin and his anti-OAS colleagues in 1961 which introduced the term "barbouze" into the French language. "Barbouze" has since become the standard slang term for secret agents or mercenaries. By 1967 Bitterlin, had become the secretary of a solidarity group, France-Algérie.

²⁸ Kassir, 1992, p.165. For a fuller account of ASFA and Bitterlin's life, see his *La flamme et le soufre*, Véga presse, Paris, 1988. Interview with Bitterlin, Paris June 1996.

financial assistance from the Quai d'Orsay ²⁹. From October 1968 onwards, the association began to produce a regular bulletin, *France Pays Arabes*. Edmond Michelet and Louis Terrenoire typified those Gaullists who had been highly sympathetic to Israel, who then championed de Gaulle's "Arab policy", clearly marked by the resentment of first de Gaulle and then Pompidou that France's stance in the Middle East was so poorly received in France ³⁰. By the 1970s *France Pays Arabes* became an important vehicle for the dissemination of information about France's growing ties with the Arab world, although its reliance on external funding and the influence of ac-hoc donations to ASFA and FPA is evident. As Iraq strove to influence France's Arab policy from 1974/75 onwards, and as Iraqi representatives played a greater role in intra-Arab politics in Paris, Iraqi courting of ASFA and Bitterlin increased. The creation of ASFA and a "pro-Arabe" presence in Paris dovetailed with the rise of interest in the Arab world by French financiers. Thus in 1970 the *Chambre de commerce franco-arabe* was formed by Michel Habib-Déloncle. Habib-Déloncle was a Gaullist député and, like Bitterlin and others associated with ASFA, became a permanent fixture of this emerging "milieu" ³¹. The personal networks woven around solidarity and information groups such as ASFA played a role in fostering informal relations with Arab administrations. Nevertheless, until 1972 this milieu was still primarily concerned with Palestine, an issue which in post-May 68 France was largely polarized between extreme left-wing sympathy with Palestinians, and the Gaullist tendency of ASFA ³². By the time Jean-Pierre Chevenement, who was evidently *not* from the same Gaullist stable as Michelet, Terrenoire et al, came to chair the *association des amitiés franco-iraquiennes* (AAFI), the format and function of such "friendship" associations was long established. AAFI included several figures who had been prominent in ASFA, notably Jacques Berque, Pierre Rossi and Philippe Saint-Robert (see chapter 7, section five).

Philippe Saint-Robert

²⁹ Frémaux, 1995, p.280.

³⁰ Terrenoire, L. De Gaulle, Israel et les Palestiniens, Paris, eds du Témoignage chrétien, Paris, 1989.

³¹ Frémaux, 1995, p.281.

³² Kassir, 1992, pp166-172.

By the late sixties, Philippe de Saint-Robert had become one of the rare prominent Gaullists with a knowledge of the Arab world beyond the Maghreb. Through his numerous writings on Arab issues Saint-Robert clearly had an impact on this milieu, not least because of his stature as a leading Gaullist writer and thinker. Saint-Robert was in touch with Jobert and himself claims to have been the originator of Pompidou's "Mediterranean Policy", and had visited Libya several times in the late sixties ³³. Pompidou's biographer credits Saint-Robert and Jacques Benoist-Méchin as both having been influential in guiding Pompidou's ideas on the Middle East ³⁴. Saint-Robert and Benoist-Méchin make an improbable couple. Yet the extensive writings of Benoist-Méchin, a political and literary figure from a previous generation, appear to have had a significant impact upon the evolution of French thinking about the Middle East. Benoist-Méchin, who died in 1983, was a complex and enigmatic figures. His influence is due to his stature as a pre-war literary intellectual and thence senior Vichy politician, rising to become Pétain's foreign minister. Sentenced to death for his part in Vichy in 1947, he was pardoned and released in the mid-1950s. He then became an acclaimed military historian, writing notably on the inter-war German army. His works seen both at the time and subsequently, as being key texts in understanding the collapse and collaboration of war-time France.

In 1959 he published a vast travelogue of a journey through Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Syria and Turkey he undertook in the winter of 1957-58. This book, "The Arab spring" is an extraordinary, 600-page political portrait of the Middle East. His prescient account largely prophesised many of the changes that were to come due to oil and revolution. The book sold excellently in France and had a profound impact on subsequent French perceptions of the region³⁵. Benoist-Méchin went on to write numerous books on Middle Eastern and literary topics, most notably on successive Saudi monarchs ³⁶.

³³ Saint-Robert, Ph. *Les septennats interrompus*, R.Lafont, Paris, 1977, p.35-39.

³⁴ Roussel, E. *Georges Pompidou 1911-74*, J.C. Lattes, Paris, 2nd ed, 1994, p.343.

³⁵ Benoist-Méchin, J. *Un printemps Arabe*, Albin Michel, Paris, 1959. A remarkable snapshot of the Middle East, this comprises portraits of and interviews with Nasser, Nuri Said, Michel Aflak as well as the monarchs, courtiers and common people of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

³⁶ Fayçal, *roi d'Arabie*, Albin Michel, Paris, 1975. Following his trip to Saudi in 1958, he had also published *Ibn-Seoud, la naissance d'un royaume*, Albin Michel, Paris, 1959.

Due to his literary talents and political contacts, Benoist-Méchin undoubtedly had influence in the Fifth Republic, notably via Pompidou and Michel Jobert. He had extensive contacts in the Arab world, and, like Michel Jobert, was a *confidant* of Hassan II of Morocco. The meager literature available suggests that he undoubtedly had an impact on both the mid-60s reinvention of French Arab and commercial policy in the region. Benoist-Méchin was a frequent visitor to the Arab world in 1966/67. An astonishing photo of him and Gadaffi, meeting illicitly in a Libyan oasis on January 12 1967, a full 20 months *before* he took power, suggests that he was no stranger to the speed and efficiency with which Pompidou's new administration signed deal with Libya³⁷. Similarly the former Pétainist toured a series of capitals in the weeks prior to the June 1967 war.

Eric Roussel, Pompidou's biographer and the editor of Benoist-Méchin's writings, is guarded as to the impact that he had on Arab policy;

*Présenter l'historien comme l'inspirateur secret de la politique arabe de la Ve République relève du roman-feuilleton; sous estimer totalement la portée de ses conceptions est une autre erreur*³⁸. Yet elsewhere the same author states that he was a crucial point of contact with the Arab world for Michel Jobert and Georges Pompidou³⁹. Jobert, also a fine writer, who also maintained close links with Moroccan and Algerian leaderships, appears to have numerous points in common with Benoist-Méchin⁴⁰.

6 Jacques Chirac, Giscard D'Estaing and France's relationship with Iraq in the seventies

³⁷ Benoist-Méchin, J. "A l'épreuve du temps", vol.3, 1947-71, Bourin/Julliard, Paris, 1993, plates between pp.128-129.

³⁸ Benoist-Méchin, J. 1993, p 12.

³⁹ Roussel, E. Georges Pompidou, (2nd ed.) J.C.Lattes, Paris, 1994, p.343.

⁴⁰ Benoist-Méchin's role evidently raises the far broader issue, sadly beyond the scope of this text, of what role, if any, either explicit or implicit anti-semitic sentiment played in motivating those advocating renewed Franco-Arab ties in the period. This goes both for those of Benoist-Méchin's generation and those attracted to the diverse pro-Iraqi movements in the 1970s and 80s. This was discussed in several 1996 interviews, notably concerning Charles St.-Prot (Saddam Hussein's French biographer) and, to a lesser degree, Gilles Munier, as well as others.

When Saddam Hussein made his first visit to Paris in June 1972, Jacques Chirac was agriculture minister. Chirac had headed George Pompidou's private office in the mid-sixties; like Michel Jobert he was both a graduate of ENA and a member of the elite *cour des comptes*. His promotion to minister of the interior in the final months of Pompidou government reflected his growing status within the divided Gaullist movement. If the election of Valéry Giscard D'Estaing in May 1974, marked the ascendancy of a more liberal, *atlanticist* and technocratic Gaullism, this image was initially enhanced by Giscard's appointment of the relatively young and dynamic Chirac to the post of Prime Minister.

Giscard's foreign policy has been analysed, written and argued about in France far more than policy under Pompidou ⁴¹. There are three obvious reasons for this; Giscard served his full seven-year term, he launched a series of major policy initiatives and, lacking the unalloyed Gaullist mantle of his predecessor, he strengthened the presidential prerogative in foreign policy, centralising power in the presidency, while drawing extensively on parallel networks of advisors. Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, came to the presidency with virtually no direct experience of foreign policy. There was little love lost between the president, Pompidou, and Giscard, his aloof and self-assured minister of finance. When head of the presidential office, one of Michel Jobert's key tasks was to ensure that presidential initiatives were not blocked by Giscard's finance ministry, which, whenever possible was kept at arms length from foreign policy initiatives. After the apparent autonomy and dynamism exercised by the Quai d'Orsay under Michel Jobert during 1973-74, Giscard was anxious to ensure his foreign minister faithfully executed his policy. His three foreign ministers were all largely passive, in-house career diplomats. Jean de Sauvagnargues, Louis de Guiringaud, Jean François-Ponçet were all former senior Quai d'Orsay figures, none had their own power bases within the divided Gaullist movement. Giscard pointedly declared that "I am the real foreign minister" to his first secretary general of the foreign ministry ⁴².

⁴¹ Cohen, S. Smouts, M.-C., *La politique extérieure de Valéry Giscard D'Estaing*, FNSP, Paris, 1985. This contains one, largely descriptive chapter on the Middle East, ch.14, Errera-Hoechstetter, Kassir & Mardam-Bey, 1993, pp.211-266 provide by far the most detailed account of policy towards Israel between 1974-1981.

⁴² Cohen, S. *La Monarchie nucléaire; les coulisses de la politique étrangère sous la Ve république*, Hachette, Paris, 1986, p.118.

There were distinct nuances and underlying shifts in foreign policy under Giscard. He adopted a less confrontational policy vis-a-vis the United States, while emphasising increased North:South cooperation, elaborating a far more ambitious framework for cooperation between rich and poor countries, emphasising interdependence. He promoted Franco-Algerian relations as the cornerstone of far more ambitious edifice of "North:South" cooperation thus broadening (and diluting) the stress on Mediterranean policy pioneered by Pompidou. To this end Giscard reinforced Euro-Arab dialogue, within the context of north:south relations, a preparatory meeting in April 1975 paving the way for 19 months (December 1975 - June '77) of deliberations between 27 countries which was supposed to give meaning to the notion of a New International Economic Order. While the talks produced nothing tangible, such initiatives contributed to French presentation and self-image of cooperation.

In summary, it is clear that overall Giscard consolidated the monarchical tendencies of the Fifth Republic presidency in the domain of foreign policy. However, the one crucial exception to this was in the Middle East. Giscard himself was wary of Middle Eastern issues, and policy towards the region was the only one where he allowed his young Prime Minister a certain degree of autonomy. Thus throughout Chirac's first premiership (May 1974-August 1976 ⁴³), policy towards the Gulf states and Iraq was one area where Chirac could exercise his own ideas and judgement. This he did by forging what by all accounts appears to have been a close commercial and relationship through personal ties with Saddam Hussein and others in his entourage. This trend of a prime ministerial, rather than presidential, role in the region continued under Chirac's more a-political, technocratic successor Raymond Barre, who thus also found himself deeply immersed in Middle Eastern and Iraqi affairs.

The following paragraphs will chronicle the rapid deepening and broadening of Franco-Iraqi relations during the mid to late seventies. This period was marked by a swift expansion of commercial links and closer personal and political ties between Iraqi and French politicians. These ties were consolidated during four principal tours;

⁴³ Chirac resigned in august 1976, replaced by the more technocratic Raymond Barre. Chirac then formed the *Rassemblement pour la république* (RPR). He again became premier in *cohabitation* with Mitterrand 1986-88, see ch.7.

Jacques Chirac's trip to Baghdad in November 1974, the second official visit of Saddam Hussein to Paris in June 1975, the brief visit of both Chirac and Raymond Barre, then minister of external commerce, to Baghdad in January 1976, and then Barre's major trip to Iraq as Prime Minister in July 1977.

Although the personality of Chirac is important, it is clear that both Chirac and Barre promoted a more dynamic commercial policy. As such French policy towards the Middle East offers the most clear example of the mercantile thrust of French foreign policy developed throughout the 1970s. This was honed under Giscard ⁴⁴. The broad lines of France's commercial presence in the Middle East and Iraq thus followed and consolidated the template established under Pompidou, most explicitly during Michel Jobert's time as foreign minister, particularly during his tour of the region in early 1974.

Bilateral ties between Paris and Baghdad were boosted by the visit of Michel Jobert to Iraq on February 6-9 1974. Yet by this time both commercial and political exchanges had become increasingly frequent. Pompidou's minister of industry, Jean Charbonnel, had visited Baghdad in mid-December 1973. The number of French industrial projects visited during the tour indicated the degree to which French companies were expanding their presence in the country. By late 1973 Renault were building lorries in Iskanderia, Alsthom assuring electricity generation and other French interests opening new cement and textile factories. In mid-October 1973 the Creusot-Loire steel group had signed a FF600m contract to supply an integrated iron and steel complex to be built close to Basra at Khor al-Zubair. A week after Jobert quit Baghdad in early February 1974, a 45-strong commercial delegation, led by the head of the Franco-Arab chamber of commerce, Michel Habib-Deloncle arrived. On 12 March 1974, the culmination of the previous three months of exchanges, an accord on economic cooperation was signed. In fact, following Jobert's visit to Baghdad, a tentative schedule of subsequent visits by French officials was arranged. The then agriculture minister Jacques Chirac appears to have been slated to visit Iraq in April or May to discuss a proposed agro-industrial project near Kirkuk, with a visit by Prime Minister Pierre Messmer pencilled in for the end of 1974 ⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ Lacorne, D. "La politique de promotion des exportations; le Colbertisme dans les moyens, le libéralisme comme fin", ch.6 in Cohen & Smouts, 1985.

⁴⁵ Combat, 11.2.74.

Although the French government changed in May 1974, there was no re-orientation on policy towards Iraq. Overall France still had to ensure supplies of oil from the Middle East and Iraq, while trying to counterbalance the resulting commercial deficit with an aggressive policy of commercial exports and investments in Iraq. This thus provided the context for the visit of the new premier, Jacques Chirac, to Baghdad in November 1974. Chirac was preceded in Baghdad by Raymond Offroy, former diplomat, turned député who was then heading both the parliamentary group of *France Pays Arabes*, and the newly formed *Association parlementaire européenne pour la coopération euro-arabe*. Just prior to Chirac's trip, Giscard's minister of agriculture, Christian Bonnet, also visited Iraq, signing a series of agricultural cooperation agreements, in early November. Prior to Chirac's departure, Philippe Saint-Robert wrote an eloquent plea for closer economic cooperation with Baghdad, stressing the "legitimate complementarity" of French and Iraqi requirements (oil and industrial plant) and the plethora of industrial projects that Iraq was considering offering France. He also stressed that Chirac's administration was intent on pursuing the Gaullist "Mediterranean policy", with France's interior minister Michel Poniatowski leaving for Algeria, and Algeria's minister of energy also visiting Paris in the same month ⁴⁶, all of which was presented as being the French specificity of the embryonic "Euro-Arab dialogue".

Chirac arrived in Baghdad on November 30 1974, for a three day trip; the first French head of government to visit Baghdad. The bilateral agreement on oil supplies for France was already in place. However, the key commercial objective of the visit was to advance negotiations on as many major French industrial projects in Iraq as possible. These included the construction of a petro-chemical complex at Basra (awarded to Creusot-Loire), two cement factories, Baghdad's military hospital, the renovation of Baghdad airport and the possibility that France supply its colour TV system, SECAM, to Iraq. With such projects under way or in the offing, it is easy to see how France had become, in the course of 1974, the largest single supplier of goods to Iraq.

Commercially Chirac, declared that the trip was a success "beyond all expectations", judged on the volume of contracts signed. Later it was noted that the impetuous

⁴⁶ Le Chemin de Baghdad, Quotidien de Paris, 1.11.74.

premier had greatly overestimated the sum of FFr15bn contracts signed, perhaps carried away by the fact that he personally persuaded Saddam Hussein that Iraq should adopt the SECAM TV system. Pechiny were awarded a contract to construct an aluminum factory. Several other large contracts were left to be finalised during the February 1975 trip to Baghdad of Giscard's minister of planning, Ségard. It is also important to note, in the light of the subsequent polemics on the subject, that during the visit, French officials openly announced that France would also supply Iraq with two nuclear reactors ⁴⁷.

Although it remains a factor which is difficult to evaluate, it is clear that on a personal level, Chirac and Saddam Hussein appeared to get on excellently. The two men had tête-à-tête lasting over six hours during the trip, apparently establishing a personal friendship. Several journalists accompanying the premier noted this "... le courant passait entre ces deux hommes d'apparence dissemblable" ⁴⁸. Chirac "found Saddam had a good deal of charm, even if he seemed a bit brutal... he felt he was dealing with a great statesman. Given that the Soviets appeared reticent to develop their nuclear cooperation with Iraq, Saddam Hussein had a real need for French technology" ⁴⁹. These personal ties between the two men were to be both further deepened, and much commented on, during Saddam's return trip to France ten months later; Chirac greeting Saddam in Orly on September 5 1975 with the accolade "You are my personal friend... you're assured of my esteem, consideration and affections" a phrase he would, a decade and a half later, come to regret.

The broader political framework of Franco-Arab relations was also elaborated during this November 1974 trip with the keynotes being (the very Gaullist...) mutual respect for national independence, bilateral partnership between energy producers and consumers, and Euro-Arab cooperation ⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ albeit "à des fins pacifiques..", Figaro, 3.12.74.

⁴⁸ Dumoulin, J. L'Express, 9-15.12.74. Press coverage of these trips merits further consideration, particularly in the light of the subsequent scandal and revelations over French nuclear policy. In retrospect, it is easy to forget the degree to which general press coverage of French Middle Eastern and African policy remained quiescent and uncritical until the late seventies.

⁴⁹ "a former French ambassador in Baghdad", probably Depis, quoted by Angeli, p.52.

⁵⁰ The content and vocabulary of this text, and that given by Chirac 22 years later as President in Cairo, can usefully be compared, see conclusion fn 11.

La coopération entre la France et l'Irak est confirmée aux intérêts des deux pays dont l'aspiration politique fondamentale est la sauvegarde de l'indépendance nationale ... Le monde du 21^e siècle devrait connaître un monde arabe uni et une Europe unie ayant des liens étroits... Chirac also expressed openly what was to become the standard French view of Iraqi Baathism - shared by both right-wing Gaullists and Socialists alike - *Ce nationalisme (irakien) au meilleur sens du terme, ce socialisme comme moyen de mobiliser les énergies avec pour but d'assurer l'avenir sont très proches des sentiments du peuple français*"⁵¹.

It is not possible in the current version of this text to undertake a satisfactory analysis of the role that what is perhaps best termed the "ideological impulsion and justification" played in the Franco-Iraqi relationship. We have already seen that the roots of this "shared secular and republican" tradition and myth were already evident in the discourses of General Aref and de Gaulle in 1968. Indeed they were already presented in an embryonic form by Jacques Berque and *Le Monde's* correspondent when diplomatic ties were restored in 1963 (see chapter 4).

Yet from 1974 Jacques Chirac - no doubt in part as a conscious and explicit bid to simultaneously re-define and lay unique claim (i.e. against Giscard) to the heritage of de Gaulle's foreign policy, stressed these allegedly shared political traits between France and Iraq. Clearly such themes, secularism, national sovereignty and autonomy in a bi-polar world, were central to the beliefs and writings of many Gaullists (Saint-Robert being typical in this respect). Coupled with an essentially technocratic, modernising view of socio-economic development such themes came to be at the centre of not only Franco-Iraqi relations, but also ties between France and Algeria. Following his departure from office in 1974, Michel Jobert greatly elaborated such themes in his journalistic and other writings. Yet what is simultaneously enigmatic, confusing and crucial to stress is that such beliefs, and thus the attraction and appeal in the burgeoning ties between Baathist Iraq and France in the 1970s, were not - indeed still to this day are not - restricted to uniquely Gaullist or even right-wing thinkers and politicians. Two examples. Firstly that a variety of far-right French republicans and monarchists have

⁵¹ Figaro, 3.12.74, The Baathism/nationalism/socialism as a progressive, and above all secular ideology would become an important argument used by those in France favouring Iraq in its struggle against revolutionary Iran.

systematically been attracted to Iraq. This is best personified in the various writings of Charles Saint-Prot. This is most explicitly the case in his 1987 biography of Saddam Hussein ⁵². But far more importantly numerous left-wing republicans embraced this notion of Iraq, most obviously and influentially in the person of Jean-Pierre Chevènement. Chevènement, who was close to Berque, espoused these beliefs from the seventies onwards. Yet it is clear that support for Iraq post 1979 was premised on and legitimised by opposition to theocratic Iran, presented by left and right wing French alike as the very antithesis of secular, progressive Iraq. The most clear exposition of this is in his 1995 book ⁵³.

Both Jacques Chirac's personal friendship with Saddam Hussein, and his development of the theme of shared ideological premise between French and Iraqi political systems and leaders were further developed during Saddam Hussein's second trip to Paris in June 1975. The details of this trip, which cemented the Chirac:Hussein special relationship, are extensively chronicled by Angeli and Mesnier, and are reproduced in Timmerman.

On November 18 1975 the French minister of industry and research, Michel D'Ornano signed three preliminary protocols defining an "enhanced cooperation framework" between the two countries covering the domains of nuclear, computing and telecommunication issues.

Jacques Chirac again visited Baghdad on January 26 1976, for a brief stopover as he returned from Delhi. He was accompanied by Raymond Barre then still minister of external commerce. The press noted that the trip appeared in part to try and "relaunch" Franco-Iraqi commercial ties. Chirac had been far too over-optimistic when he had announced that FFr15bn of contracts had been signed. A year later, contracts worth only FFr3bn had actually been agreed. In retrospect the Iraqis appear to have been somewhat bemused by the "triumphalism" of Chirac's pronouncements after the 1974 trip. While Saddam Hussein made no secret of the political reasons for choosing a partnership with France, the Iraqis proved tenacious negotiators when it came to the

⁵² Saint-Prot, Ch. Saddam Hussein; un gaullisme arabe, Albin Michel 1987.

⁵³ Chevènement, J.-P., *Le vert et le noir; intégrisme, pétrole, dollar*, Grasset 1995. See especially

detail of contracts, and numerous of the projects outlined in 1974 were rejected or modified because the Iraqis found them far too expensive in relation to tenders offered by other OECD countries, French companies frequently finding themselves in stiff competition with firms from Japan and W Germany, as minister of industry Michel d'Ornano found when visiting Baghdad in November 1975. There was criticism from some French industrialists that insufficient commercial preparatory work had been done by France in Iraq. In late May Raymond Barre, still as minister of external commerce, returned to Baghdad, heading the French team at the Franco-Iraqi joint-commission and attempting to resolve some of the outstanding problems.

During the bilateral exchanges and visits of 1974-76, much attention in France focussed on the civilian commercial potential of the Iraqi market. However, in reality, military and nuclear affairs increasingly came to preoccupy the leaders of both countries in the later seventies.

During Chirac's December 1974 trip to Baghdad, the possibility of Iraq purchasing Mirage fighter planes was again raised. It should be recalled that this was first discussed in early 1968 and that at the time, despite extensive negotiations, agreement was never reached. During the late 1974 trip, Chirac had been accompanied by Hughes de L'Estoile, since the early seventies international director of the *délégation ministérielle de l'armement* of the DGA. During both Saddam Hussein's September 1975 trip to France, and again during his stopover in Baghdad in January, Chirac had pursued the idea of a major sale of aircraft to Iraq. Saddam had observed the Mirage F-1 in flight in France and in early 1976 Iraqi pilots had flown tests on both Dassault's Mirage F-1 and the smaller Alpha-Jet at the Istres flight centre. In early September 1976 an Iraqi delegation led by the minister of defense appears to have confirmed the order for 72 Mirage F-1. No firm details were published, and doubts remained as to the delivery schedule⁵⁴. Until this point all of Iraq's modern aviation was of Soviet origin.

In August 1976 Jacques Chirac resigned as Prime Minister, (forming a new Gaullist party, the *Rassemblement pour la république*, RPR, and the following year becoming the mayor of Paris). He was replaced by Raymond Barre. By the time that Raymond

chapters 9 (pour un projet nationale arabe moderne) and 10 (une diplomatie laïque).

Barre visited Baghdad as Prime Minister on June 25-26 1977 the sale of the 72 Mirages was at the top of the Franco-Iraqi agenda. Sales of Alouette helicopters, AMX armoured vehicles and artillery were also under discussion. It had been agreed to deliver the Mirage-F1 in two batches of 36, although negotiations over the precise specifications of the planes and their equipment continued, notably the Thompson-CSF radar system and Matra's Magic missile system. At this time Mirage's manufacturer, Dassault-Bréguet was developing the Mirage-F1's successor, the Mirage 2000. Although not due for completion for the French air force until mid-1978 Iraq had reportedly expressed interest in the plane to Barre ⁵⁵. On a trip to Paris in May 1979 the Iraqi defense minister Khairallah met with his French counterpart Yvon Bourges to discuss possible purchase of the Mirage-2000 ⁵⁶.

Conclusion

By way of a truncated conclusion to this chapter two trends are worth highlighting.

- Firstly the roots and evolution of Jacques Chirac's relationship with Iraq. Although Chirac left the premier's office in August 1976, in effect to create an alternative, rival Gaullist movement to Giscard, the impulsion he gave to the links between Bagdad and France had gain sufficient momentum and scope that his successor Raymond Barre continued to develop the trade. Chirac's entourage and followers maintained close links with Bagdad, people who were subsequently key foreign policy advisors - such as Eric Desmarest and Serge Boidevaix - remained involved in the various Iraq dossiers. Gaullists who joined or were sympathetic to Chirac's aims also maintained ties; Philippe Saint Robert for example acting as Chirac's envoy to Saddam in 1979 ⁵⁷. Dassault's expanding links with Bagdad in the later seventies are also important to Chirac and his movement, Marcel and then Serge Dassault being both long-time family friends and influential - not to mention rich - political allies of Chirac.

- Secondly, although this has not been sufficiently detailed in the preceding text, it is important to highlight the degree to which the composition of

⁵⁴ Dumoulin, J. Figaro, 11.9.76.

⁵⁵ Le Monde, 8.7.77.

⁵⁶ Le Monde 8.5.79.

French trade with and investment in Iraq changed from the mid-1970s. As explained in previous chapters, up to and beyond 1972 it was oil which was the bedrock of trade, France running a significant commercial deficit with Iraq, despite the beginnings of arms sales from the late sixties on. As witnessed during Chirac's November 1974 trip to Baghdad, in the mid-1970s it was civilian - particularly public works - contracts which became crucial to France. Yet by the late 1970s two other domains would come to dominate the trade relations between the two countries. Firstly sales of nuclear technology, secondly increased military sales. By 1979 large French defense companies such as Dassault, Thomson, Matra and Aérospatiale all had established presence in the expanding Iraqi market for arms. Following the Iranian revolution in 1979, and Iraq's declaration of war against Iran in September 1980, their presence, along with that of other western arms companies, was set to greatly expand.

vc

Chapter 6. *Plus ça change...*continuity under Mitterrand;**Israel's destruction of Iraq's nuclear reactor, the impact of the Iran-Iraq war.**

vc

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The situation in 1979; prior to the Iranian revolution and Iran:Iraq war
- 3 Franco-Iraqi Nuclear cooperation
- 4 François Mitterrand, arms sales and the Iran-Iraq war
- 5 Complications with Iran, July-August 1981
- 6 French “pro-Iraqi” interests and continuity of policy
- 7 France's “loan” of five Super Etendard's to Iraq
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Chapter 6. *Plus ça change...continuity* under Mitterrand; Israel's destruction of Iraq's nuclear reactor, the impact of the Iran-Iraq war.

1 Introduction

Chapter 5 showed that between 1972 and 1980, France greatly increased its volume of exports of both civilian and military goods to Iraq. Both states consciously and deliberately entered into this close commercial and political relationship. This was largely driven by bilateral considerations under the control of both governments. Yet during the period 1979-1981 shifts in the Middle Eastern politics meant that the relationship increasingly came to be shaped by factors beyond either state's direct control.

Three factors had a direct impact Paris-Baghdad ties. Firstly the Iranian revolution, and the granting of asylum to Iranians in France first to Khomeini himself, and thence his opponents. Secondly Israeli hostility to Iraq's nuclear programme, culminating in the destruction of the French-supplied Iraqi nuclear reactor at Tammuz in June 1981. Thirdly, and most importantly, the aftermath of Iraq's September 1980 attack on Iran.

The Iran-Iraq war had two key implications. Firstly Iraq needed far more weapons, which France could and did supply. Secondly these supplies to Tehran's enemy earned France the deep hostility of Iran. These three factors would condition bilateral Franco-Iraqi relations over the coming decade. This chapter will examine the pressures upon the relationship in five different spheres:

- 1 Nuclear issues: France's supplying to Iraq of a nuclear reactor. This was agreed in the mid-seventies under the premierships of Jacques Chirac and Raymond Barre. Despite intense US and Israeli opposition to the supply of nuclear materials to Iraq, France under Giscard constructed a reactor for Iraq, Osiraq at Tammuz. This was part of a broader policy of developing exporting French nuclear technology in the 1970s, in part to reduce France's own dependence upon imported oil examined in earlier chapters. In 1975 France the *Commissariat à l'énergie atomique* (CEA) had sought and obtained a \$1bn Iranian participation in the pan-European

Eurodif project to enrich uranium. This loan would greatly complicate relations with revolutionary Iran in the 1980s. Israeli attempts to prevent the construction and delivery of a nuclear reactor to Iraq in 1979-80 failed but immediately after François Mitterrand's election as the fifth Republic's first Socialist President, Israel bombed the reactor, triggering the first foreign policy crisis of Mitterrand's *septennat*. One constant theme in post-1981 relations with both Iraq and other Gulf Arab states was Iraq's request that Tammuz be reconstructed.

- 2 The new President's shifting attitude to Iran and Iraq: François Mitterrand had been highly critical both of the Gulf policy of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and France's export of arms in the run-up to the 1981 presidential election. Yet within three months of coming to power, Mitterrand had found himself largely constrained to continue existing commitments to Iraq, via pressure both domestically and from other Arab allies, and to adopt a critical stance towards Iran. Support for Iraq in its war with Iran put France and Iran on an inevitable collision course which from late 1983 onwards became in effect an undeclared war, fought partly via proxies, largely in the Lebanon.

- 3 Petrodollars and personal emissaries: The need to counter the preconceived perception of Mitterrand being "pro-Israeli" weighed heavily on the action of the president and his advisors during 1981. Two factors, one foreign, one domestic, conditioned policy towards Arab states. With Iraq at war with Iran, the conservative states of the Gulf were increasingly concerned that Iran might triumph. With France having emerged as a key supplier of military material to Iraq, particularly in the strategically vital areas of strike aircraft and artillery, Paris came under pressure from other Arab states – *as well as western allies* – to step up military supplies to Iraq¹. This dovetailed with a key domestic consideration in the early months of the Socialist administration, the need to stabilize the franc by preventing capital flight. As already explained (chapter 3) France's burgeoning relationship with Gulf countries in the 1970s had led to the growth of Franco-Arab banks in Paris, and by 1981 oil-rich countries had significant deposits in the French financial sector. During June and July 1981 François Mitterrand dispatched a series of envoys to the Arab world to try and persuade Arab rulers that there would be no fundamental shift in policy. This initiative was bolstered

¹ Although the Franco-Iraqi relationship evidently has a logic of its own (and from the Iraqi viewpoint, as examined in ch.4, was seen alongside its ties with and supplies from the Soviet Union)

by the visit to Paris in June 1981 of King Khaled of Saudi Arabia. The way Mitterrand actually implemented this strategy, by extensive use of personal friends and parallel networks with good contacts in the Arab world, rather than relying uniquely on the formal channels of foreign policy, was indicative of the personalised manner in which policy towards the Middle East would continue to be run during the 1980s.

- 4 Arms and Debt: France, in supplying Iraq with increasing volumes of weaponry, notably advanced artillery and aircraft (Mirage F1 and 2000s) found that Baghdad's debts became unsustainable. Thus from 1983 onwards, Iraqi debts to France became a major issue of concern in bilateral relations. French officials found themselves locked into a vicious circle of trade and debt, in that Iraq – usually in the person of vice-president Tariq Aziz – was able to leverage more supplies of more advanced weaponry out of the French state, arguing that if more weapons were not forthcoming, Iraq might be defeated and thus be unable to repay its debts. Thus to the triumvirate of oil, arms and nuclear dossiers that had dominated relations since the sixties, was added the factor of sovereign debt.

- 5 Relations with Iran: France's sale to Iraq of increasingly sophisticated weaponry, notably the convoluted "loan" of five *Super-Etendard* planes and advanced missile systems to Iraq in 1983 greatly escalated Iranian hostility to France. Isolated incidents of attacks on French targets in Lebanon since 1981 then escalated sharply, and it became clear that French policy in the Middle East could not indefinitely neglect relations with Iran. From 1984 onwards a tentative and delicate "re-balancing" of France's relationship with Baghdad and Tehran began. This reconfiguration of policy would be greatly complicated by the seizure of French hostages in Lebanon in 1985, and the violence triggered by Paris's failure to manage its relations with Iran and Iraq would dominate foreign policy during the constitutionally unprecedented period of *cohabitation* between President Mitterrand and his right-wing premier Jacques Chirac during 1986-88.

2 The situation in 1979; prior to the Iranian revolution and Iran:Iraq war

By 1979 the picture was somewhat mixed. The sale of the nuclear reactor to Iraq continued, as did the sales of Mirage-F1 and other armaments. However, the "fabulous

broader geo-strategic shifts of the early 1980s, notably the warming of US-Iraqi ties, need

contracts" in the civil domain promised in 1974 by Jacques Chirac had only partially materialised as French companies found themselves out-bid by other OECD producers. Thus by the time that the minister of external commerce, Jean-François Deniau presided over the third joint-economic commission on February 17-20 1979, relations were far less certain than they had been at their nadir of 1974-76 (see ch.5). Ties had been tarnished and complicated by a shooting incident outside the Iraqi embassy in Paris in July 1978. A French policeman and two others were killed as embassy staff opened fire after a Palestinian seized hostages in the embassy. Iraq at this point was backing hard-line Palestinian factions, notably the renegade PLO rep in Baghdad, Abu Nidal, who had begun a campaign of terror against PLO officials, assassinating the PLO representatives in Kuwait and London. Two days after the shoot-out outside Iraq's Paris embassy, the PLO representative in Paris was murdered, with suspicion falling on Nidal and his Iraqi patron. This incident highlighted an aspect of Franco-Iraqi relations hitherto neglected in the text. With the establishment of close ties between Iraqi and French elites, Iraq came to be a major factor in intra-Arab politics in Paris ².

Raymond Barre re-visited Baghdad on July 7 1979. As Europe in general and France in particular faced further oil price rises and potential shortages, Barre's trip had three objectives. Firstly to reassure the Iraqis over the delivery of the nuclear reactor. Despite the destruction of the original model at La Seyne three months previously, and the mounting pressure on France not to supply enriched uranium to Iraq, France would honour the contract. Secondly ensure continued favourable supplies of oil to France. Thirdly to continue to promote France's military and civilian exports to Iraq. The former comprised above all Dassault's Mirage-F1 already on order, and the possibility of sales of Mirage-2000. The latter involved in particular a contract for the extension of Baghdad airport, as well as a series of irrigation and railway projects. Thus industry

consideration; aspects of French support for Iraq suited US policy in the region.

² Le Monde, 2.8.78, [d12p15]. The matter was quickly hushed up. Three Iraqi diplomats were "expelled", and the Iraqi press mentioned the affair only as an intra-Palestinian struggle, Le Figaro, 3.8.78. The Iraqi ambassador Al-Wandawi made no comment. The family of the murdered police inspector, Jacques Capela, were discreetly paid-off by Baghdad, as was the French Police Federation. The deal was negotiated by a confidant of Giscard's, Victor Capot. See Péan, *La Menace*, Fayard, Paris, 1988, p. 111, Angeli, C. Mesnier, S. Notre Allié Saddam, O.Orban, Paris, 1992, p.76. On Iraq's role in Arab and Palestinian politics in Paris, see Kassir, S, Mardam-Bey, F. *Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem la France et le conflit israélo-arabe*, Institut des études palestiniennes, Washington, D.C. 1992. Beau, N. *Paris, Capitale Arabe*, Seuil, 1995, esp.ch 7.

minister Jean-François Deniau returned to Baghdad in October 1979 to attend to the Baghdad International Trade Fair, where over 40 French companies were exhibiting.

By mid-1979 French officials appear to have redoubled attempts to consolidate links with Iraq, in part because of the sense that Iraq was in the process of modifying its stance to the Soviet Union and moderating its radical stance vis-a-vis other, conservative oil producers, notably Saudi Arabia. Again, domestic Iraqi consideration appear to have influenced foreign policy. Opposition at home from both Iraqi Communists and Kurds led to a further cooling of Baghdad's relations with the Soviet Union. This, coupled with the fact that the Soviet Union now required cash rather than oil-barter terms for arms supplies, strengthened Iraq's desire to purchase western weaponry.

3 Franco-Iraqi Nuclear cooperation

The reporting and writing about Franco-Iraqi nuclear ties has had a checkered history. The, largely secret, development of nuclear cooperation with Israel and France's building of the Dimona facility were narrated in chapter two. In the 1970s, as France sought to develop its own nuclear industry, and export nuclear technology to gain economies of scale and help offset R&D costs, it was fairly open about its success in selling to foreign clients. By 1979, with increased criticism from western allies, and growing concern in the entourage of Giscard about proliferation, there was evident tension between the commercial benefits of exports, and the political dangers of such a policy. Officials nevertheless defended existing contracts, such as that signed with Iraq in 1975. As explained later in this chapter, Israel's destruction of Tammuz in June 1981 greatly complicated the issue, generating far more publicity and awareness of France's nuclear exports ³. In the mid-eighties, both Jacques Chirac, who became prime minister in 1986, and Giscard attempted to deny their role in providing Iraq with nuclear technology ⁴.

³ Péan, P. *Les Deux bombes, comment la France a donné la bombe à Israël et à l'Irak*, Fayard, Paris, 1982

⁴ Angeli, 1992, p.56-58. A polemic surfaced in August 1986 following Chirac's denial of any responsibility in interview with an Israeli daily; *Yediot Aharonot*, 15.8.86; for French echos of this, see *Le Matin*, 20.8.86, *Libération*, 20.8.86.

Iraq's desire to acquire nuclear technology from France dated from mid-1974. When Iraqi officials arrived in Paris shortly after Giscard became President, they were received by André Giraud, head of the *Commissariat à l'énergie atomique* (CEA). When Jacques Chirac visited Baghdad for the first time in December 1974, Giraud, his number two at the CEA, Michel Pecqueur, and one of Chirac's principal diplomatic aides, Serge Boidevaux, accompanied Chirac⁵. Boidevaux, a senior diplomat close to Chirac and later trusted by Mitterrand, would come to play a key role in Franco-Iraq relations over the next decade. The nuclear dossier was thus discussed between French CEA officials and Iraqis in Baghdad. The French industry minister, Michel D'Ornano, then studied the matter, which was complicated by Iraq's request for a type of graphite-gas reactor no longer produced in France, where the nuclear industry had opted for pressurised water reactors. D'Ornano suggested Iraq first receive a research reactor. The issue of which type of reactor to supply to Iraq became entangled in internal-French debates about the future of the French nuclear industry and its cooperation with the American Westinghouse company⁶. When Chirac received Saddam Hussein in Paris in September 1975, the nuclear issue was discussed in more detail. Chirac took the Iraqi leader to see French nuclear installation in Cadarache in Provence, accompanied by Giraud and Pecqueur of the CEA. At a formal dinner for Saddam in Versailles during the September trip, Chirac declared that; "Iraq is in the process of putting together a coherent nuclear strategy. France would like to be involved in this strategy, at present in the domain of water-based reactors". While French official statements and press reports were careful to stress that nuclear cooperation was strictly for civil use, the following day Saddam Hussein gave an interview in Paris to the Lebanese weekly, *al-Usbu al-Arabi*, in which he declared that "the (nuclear) accord with France is the first concrete step towards the production of an Arab atomic weapon"⁷.

The deal agreed in September 1975 between France and Iraq was for France to supply a research reactor similar to Osiris, a reactor operated by the CEA at Saclay south west of Paris. An initial protocol was signed between D'Ornano and the Iraqis in November 1975. The agreement to enter into nuclear cooperation with Iraq was published in the

⁵ Angeli, 1992, p.51. The following draws heavily on ch.2 of this Angeli/Mesnier book, and that of Péan, 1982.

⁶ Le nouvel observateur, 20.10.75.

Journal Officiel, signed by Chirac and Giscard, on 18.6.76, although the final, full agreement was not signed until October 1976, after Chirac had left office two months earlier ⁸. In November 1976 the Quai d'Orsay confirmed the sale to Iraq of a research reactor, comprising 12 kilos of 93%-enriched uranium ⁹. The Iraqi reactor was thus to be known as Osirak, or Tammuz I. It operated with 93% enriched Uranium 235, a fissile material suitable for weapons. France agreed to supply six batches of U-235, each of around 12kg. The supplying of fissile material to Iraq was to be the most controversial aspect of the deal. The Quai d'Orsay were hostile to the idea of nuclear cooperation with Baghdad. The nuclear cooperation was at the centre of Raymond Barre's trip to Baghdad in July 1979, when he was accompanied by Pecqueur, now at the head of the CEA. During the trip he announced that a second, full-scale reactor would be supplied to Iraq, to be known as Tammuz II, despite the reservations and criticisms of the US.

Opposition to French nuclear sales to Iraq did not just take diplomatic forms. On the evening of 4-5 April 1979, seven explosive devices exploded in a hangar belonging to the *Constructions navales et industrielles de la Méditerranée* (CNIM), a contractor of the CEA at La Seyne, close to Marseilles. Crucial components of the reactors constructed and about to be delivered to Iraq were destroyed. No trace was found of those who had placed the sophisticated devices, with all the reports concurring that the attack was certainly the work of a professional espionage team ¹⁰. The CEA was evidently obliged to re-manufacture the destroyed components, delaying the programme by several months. The French used the attack to insert a clause into the agreement that French personnel must supervise Tammuz on-site for a period of 10 years.

A year later, on June 14 1980, an Egyptian scientist working on the Iraqi nuclear programme, Yahia al-Meshad, was found dead in the Méri dien hotel in Paris. Again, no suspects were found, and the one possible witness also mysteriously "died". Israeli statements immediately after the death, claiming that the Iraqi nuclear programme had been retarded, left little doubt that this time Israeli agents were

⁷ Angeli, 1992, p.54.

⁸ Angeli, 1992, p.57.

⁹ La Croix, 16.11.76.

behind the attack ¹¹. By July 1980 an international campaign criticising France's nuclear cooperation began, indicating that both the La Seyne and Mériadien attacks were the work of Mossad, with revelations purporting to be from an Israeli who participated in the attack at La Seyne being published in the German press ¹². On 24 September 1980 at the United Nations, two days after Iraq attacked Iran, Giscard's foreign minister Jean François-Poncet defended France's policy of nuclear cooperation, confirming that France had delivered the first consignment of 12kg of U-235 to Iraq ¹³. France insisted that it would deliver Uranium to Iraq, stressing that Iraq was a signatory to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The polemic over the delivery of enriched Uranium to Baghdad erupted at a crucial moment. The week after Iraq opened the war with Iran, Tariq Aziz flew to Paris, principally to insist that France reconfirm its assurances that there would be no embargo on supplies of weaponry to Iraq in the context of its war with Iran. These assurances had been repeatedly given by French officials. Indeed many of those involved in the supply of arms to Iraq during 1975-79, appear to have been aware by 1980 that a conflict was possible. ¹⁴. On three separate occasions, in meetings with the French President in late September, November and December, Tariq Aziz was reassured that deliveries would continue, a critical factor as Iraq's principal armourer, the Soviet suspended supplies as the war erupted. Meanwhile France discreetly placed an embargo on an order of missile launching patrol boats for Iran. These had been ordered by the Shah and had already been largely paid for ¹⁵.

4 François Mitterrand, arms sales and the Iran-Iraq war

After Tariq Aziz's first, post-war trip to Paris in September 1979, the Iraqi ambassador redoubled his efforts to ensure that all of France's political class were behind Iraq's war effort. Mindful of the impending Presidential election, the

¹⁰ Le Matin, 15.4.79.

¹¹ Péan, P, 1988, p.100.

¹² Le nouvel observateur, 19.7.80.

¹³ Le Monde, 26.9.80, d1p60.

¹⁴ Angeli, 1992, p.83.

¹⁵ Evidently France was not the only arms supplier to be faced with a dilemma over supplies to the two sides in 1980. Britain's uneven application of controls on arms supplies at this period formed the first chapter in what would become the saga of the "Arms to Iraq" enquiry in the early 1990s. See Styan, D. French and British trade and arms sales to Iraq, 1980-90, unpublished conference paper, July '1996.

ambassador also visited the headquarters of the *Parti socialiste* (PS). However, the party rejected his arguments and condemned Iraq's aggression against Iran. This stance became that of the PS's founder and candidate at the 1981 Presidential Elections, François Mitterrand. Mitterrand had consistently criticised the foreign policy of the right, in particular condemning Giscard's mercantile policy of arms sales. In April 1980, in the national assembly, Mitterrand had vigorously criticised France's export of arms to the Middle East; "pretending to favour progress and peace in the region, while simultaneously supplying explosives does not appear to us (the PS) very logical". After the launching of war on September 22, the PS and Mitterrand condemned Baghdad, while noting the convergence of interests of the Soviet Union and US in the region, and prophesising that; "in terms of territory, the war can not progress far". In early December, the PS strongly criticised the supply of weaponry to Iraq, the Franco-Iraqi nuclear programme as well as arms supplies to Saudi Arabia. As the first of the Mirage F1 arrived in Baghdad in January 1981, the PS again condemned French policy, and had by this time come out in favour of a full embargo on arms supplies to either side ¹⁶. Given the past relations with the politicians and parties of the right, and in the light of the critical stance taken by Mitterrand vis-à-vis Iraq, it is unsurprising that in general Arab governments and their representatives in Paris favoured Chirac and Giscard in the presidential campaign of early 1981 ¹⁷. In addition, Mitterrand was known for his friendship of Israel, notably via his personal links with Shimon Peres and the Israeli Labour party. Given that Mitterrand ran a campaign in conjunction with the Communist Party, on a platform favouring major nationalisation, it is unsurprising that conservative Arab opinion was concerned.

Concern over capital flight

On May 10 1981, in the second round of the presidential elections, François Mitterrand was elected President of France. Between his election and the inauguration, following by his triumphal visit to the Pantheon on May 21, both the

¹⁶ Angeli, 1992, p.89-90.

¹⁷ Literature on the clandestine funding of political parties and presidential campaigns in the 1970s is meagre. However, it is virtually certain that Arab states contributed heavily to the 1981 campaign costs, many of those interviewed in 1996 took it as a matter of course that contracts signed in the 1970s by Chirac and Barre contained commissions for party funds. See conclusion, fn 9.

value of the franc and shares on the Paris Stock Exchange fell sharply. Given the immediate threat and reality of capital flight, and the general disquiet in the Arab world over Mitterrand's election, the new French foreign policy team was faced with two immediate, inter-linked, goals: firstly to reassure Arab states that French foreign and economic policy was stable, and that there was no reason to withdraw funds from French banks and further weaken the Franc. Secondly, that there would be no drastic shift in French policy in the Middle East, either towards Israel, or the Iran:Iraq conflict.

Such reassurances were achieved by a series of initiatives taken by Mitterrand and his officials, and then were curiously aided by an Israeli action.

- Mitterrand chose two key ministers with a considerable experience of the Arab world, excellent contacts and long pedigree's of "pro-Arab" positions, notably over Palestine. Claude Cheysson was appointed minister of foreign affairs ¹⁸. More surprisingly, Michel Jobert, Pompidou's foreign minister in 1973/74 (see chapters 4 and 5) was appointed minister of external commerce. Both ministers immediately put their existing contacts to use. Also in the cabinet, albeit at the junior post of minister of research, was Jean-Pierre Chevenement, a figure who was to become a key part of pro-Iraqi groupings in France during the next ten years ¹⁹.

- Mitterrand skilfully combined use of personal envoys drawn both from existing networks with links to Arab countries, and from his personal entourage. Several figures who were close personal friends of Mitterrand would play key roles in forming his ideas and policies towards the Arab world in the 1980s. One of these, Claude de Kémoularia, a well established banker, was crucial in coordinating a series of meeting with Arab diplomats immediately upon Mitterrand taking power. Along with Pierre Bérégovoy, and a junior advisor Hubert Védrine, Kémoularia held meetings with all Arab ambassadors in Paris during the week prior to Mitterrand's inauguration ²⁰. Roland Dumas, also a close and longstanding

¹⁸ The ministry, formally know as *Affaires étrangères*, was simultaneously re-named *Relations extérieures*. When Chirac became PM in March 1986, it reverted to *Affaires étrangères*.

¹⁹ Promoted to minister of education in 1984, Chevenement became a founding member of the *Association des amitiés franco-iraquiennes* in 1985. In 1991 he would resign as Mitterrand's defense minister over his disagreement with French policy towards Iraq.

²⁰ Védrine would become a key foreign policy aide to Mitterrand. In 1996 he published an account the Mitterrand years Védrine, H, *Les mondes de François Mitterrand : à l'Elysée, 1981-1995*, Paris, Fayard, 1996. In June 1997 he was chosen as France's third "cohabitationiste" foreign minister.

colleague of Mitterrand's, addressed a gathering of the same Arab ambassadors whom the head of the Moroccan embassy in Paris had brought together ²¹. A key advisor of Jacques Chirac on the diplomatic and Middle Eastern affairs, Serge Boidevaux, was chosen to immediately visit Baghdad in order to reassure Saddam Hussein that Mitterrand's election did not signal a change in French strategy in the region ²². He then went to Jordan with a similar message. Meanwhile, while Mitterrand despatched France's ambassador in Cairo to Saudi and the gulf states, Claude de Kémoularia also left for a tour of the Gulf states. He too then visited Baghdad. Meanwhile Mitterrand's brother, Jacques Mitterrand, who headed the French aeronautical giant *Aerospatiale* which had extensive contracts in Saudi Arabia, communicated a similar message to the King of Saudi Arabia. French links with the Saudi government and royal family were by this time extensive. Mitterrand's new defence minister, Charles Hernu, was also enrolled into the drive to reassure Arab allies of France that policy would not radically change. As all these initiatives were under way, the idea of inviting the King of Saudi Arabia, then summering in Switzerland, emerged. Being the first foreign head of state to make an official visit to Paris would reaffirm the message that France would remain loyal to its Arab allies. Two personal Arab envoys contacted by Mitterrand's team took the invitation to the Saudi monarch ²³. King Khaled's was duly invited to visit Paris on June 13 1981. However, a week before Khaled's visit, Israel's destruction of Iraq's French-supplied Tammuz nuclear reactor thrust Middle Eastern policy to the top of the new President's agenda.

Israel's destruction of Tammuz

On Sunday June 7 1981, 14 years to the day of Israel's victory in 1967, eight F16 Phantom bombers left their base at Etzion in the Sinai, crossed Saudi Arabia undetected, entered Iraqi airspace and destroyed the main Tammuz reactor. The attack did not touch the facilities where the uranium was stored. A young French technician, Damien Chaussepied, working for Air Liquide and the CEA, was killed

²¹ Angeli, 1992, p.91.

²² Boidevaux, who would become head of the ME and North Africa section of the QO in 1980, had consistently been close to Franco-Arab affairs. He was an aide in the ministry of defence between 1969-73, then director of Michel Jobert's office in the foreign ministry 1973/74 before working for Jacques Chirac when premier 1974-76.

in the attack ²⁴. The raid was hailed as a triumph by the Israeli government of Menachim Begin who justified the attack on the basis that

“Iraq was preparing to produce atomic bombs. The target of those bombs was Israel. Consequently Israel decided to act without waiting in order to ensure the security of our people... incontestable sources suggested to us two possible dates for the completion of the reactor, the first early June, the latter early September. In a short time, the reactor would have been operational. Under such conditions, no Israeli government would have been able to destroy it as such an initiative would have provoked a vast radioactivity around Baghdad and hit an innocent population... In exchange for petrol, two European governments have aided the Iraqi dictator to build nuclear weapons. Yet again, we call on them to renounce this assistance.” ²⁵.

It appears that, operating on the former date, and giving the raid a far clearer anti-French symbolism, - Israel had originally intended to stage the raid on Tammuz on May 10, the day of the second round of French Presidential elections. Shimon Peres, fearing that the act would damage Mitterrand, apparently intervening in order to delay the attack until after the election. Although little noticed at the time, Israel had, unsuccessfully, attempted to bomb the Tammuz site the previous year.

The visit of King Khaled to Paris was announced in the immediate aftermath of the Israeli raid on Tammuz. France, supported by Britain, officially called on the UN Security Council to condemn the raid on June 16 ²⁶. In France, it was the new Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy, who formally condemned the raid for the government as “an unacceptable and serious action which the French government condemns. Such a raid can only serve to increase tension in this region”, . Mitterrand himself said little on the subject; talking to the Washington Post on June 18, he simply commented that “it is a pity that the first gesture of Mr Begin has dented our goodwill”, clearly uncomfortable having come to power with the idea of improving Franco-Israeli relations, that one of his first acts as head of the government was to censure Israel. Foreign Minister Cheysson was more forthright; “All attacks on the territory of a foreign state constitute a violation of law and thus are to be condemned.

²³ Akram Ojjeh and Samir Traboulsi, *Angeli*, p.94.

²⁴ *Le Monde*, 10.6.81.

²⁵ Quoted in Péan, 1988, p.103.

The Israeli government's initiative is a serious act which the French government judges unacceptable. In addition, the bombing increases the tension in the entire region.”²⁷. All official French statements in the days following the raid stressed the fact that the reactors were for peaceful use, and that they were under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Several key questions faced the government in the wake of the Israeli destruction of Tammuz. Firstly Mitterrand had planned to make his first foreign trip to Israel; should the trip be postponed? Secondly Iraq, supported by key Arab states, was adamant that France should reconstruct the reactor; should France engage itself to reconstruct Tammuz? Thirdly how would this new element alter Iraq's immediate demands for increased supplies for weapons from France?

In the event Mitterrand's trip to Israel was postponed. What attitude to take towards Iraqi demands, both that Tammuz be reconstructed, and that Paris continue to supply arms, would be discussed in mid-August when Tariq Aziz made his first visit to Paris under Mitterrand's presidency.

The destruction of Tammuz in fact had a paradoxical result for Mitterrand. Although his government condemned the attack, it effectively removed the nuclear element from Franco-Iraqi relations. Iraq lobbied for the French to rebuild the reactor, something which the Saudis and other Arab states also pushed France to do. In July 1981 Claude Cheysson declared to a Lebanese publication that “If Iraq wants to conclude a new accord to obtain a nuclear reactor, France will be ready to supply her under the same conditions as those applied to other customers”. In mid-July, Saudi Arabia even offered to finance the work. Mitterrand agreed to let studies begin, but eventually cancelled the project in early 1983, by which time Iraq's difficulties in the war with Iran, requiring more conventional weapons and a rescheduling of debts, overshadowed long-term plans for nuclear development.

Yet, somewhat paradoxically, the destruction of Tammuz in fact aided those in France who were pushing for a closer relationship with Iraq in that from August

²⁶ Le Monde 19.6.81.

1981 onwards, growing requests for conventional weapons were agreed to, in part as compensation for the fact that the French president was clearly reticent to re-engage France in a programme of nuclear cooperation with Iraq.

5 Complications with Iran, July-August 1981.

Shoring up the Franc by courting conservative Arab states, and Israel's raid on Tammuz and its aftermath was not the only Middle Eastern issue to preoccupy Mitterrand and his advisors in the first, chaotic three months of office. By early August relations with revolutionary Iran, were at breaking point. Ties had already been strained in late 1980, early 1981 by France's continued supply of weaponry to Iraq after the latter's attack on Iran in September 1980. In late November 1980 a delegation of Iranians visited both London and Paris. The delegation, which included Mohamed Hashemi and Rafsanjani met Giscard's foreign minister François-Poncet, criticising French arms sales to Iraq²⁸. The delegation told a press conference that "the delivery of arms to Iraq worries Iran and could lead to a deterioration of relations between Tehran and Paris"²⁹. When the first four Mirage F1s were delivered to Baghdad in January 1981, there were protests both in Iran and France³⁰. It should be noted also that Iran was also discreetly attempting to purchase arms in Paris in December 1980, and also trying to secure the delivery of patrol boats ordered and paid for by the Shah³¹.

When Mitterrand came to power he did not share the anti-Iranian positions of many of the senior figures involved in French foreign policy. Although he had not, as had at one point been suggested to him, met with Khomeini during his weeks of exile in France in 1978, nor was he initially instinctively hostile to Iran's revolutionary regime. However, the US hostages crisis had made him wary of the situation in Tehran.

²⁷ Le Monde 10.6.81.

²⁸ The delegation also included a little known député Mohamed Khatemi.

²⁹ Le Monde, 30.11.80.

³⁰ Le Monde 16.2.81.

³¹ Le Canard, 4.3.81. Interview, Paul Depis, July 1986, Lyon.

On July 29 1981 two Iranians arrived in an Iranian Boeing 707 at the military airport of Evreux, seeking asylum. The presence in France of the former president of the Islamic Republic, Bani Sadr, and the leader of the Mujahidin, Masud Rajavi, was to greatly complicate Franco-Iranian relations. France accepted their presence in the country, but forbade them from making any public statements. Paul Depis, former secretary in the French embassy in Baghdad who was in 1981 now deputy director in the North Africa and Middle East department of the Quai d'Orsay, was despatched to ensure that the two did not talk to the press ³². France's reception of the two opponents of the regime in Tehran is immediately denounced in Iran. The next day, July 30 Ayatollah Khalkhali condemned France's action, declaring threateningly that "The French embassy serves no purpose, if the government hesitates, the people will decide" students immediately surrounding the French embassy in Tehran. The issue immediately escalated into a major crisis. France's ambassador in Tehran, Guy Georgy, was recalled and requested that all French nationals in Iran leave the country. Yet the same day. August 5 the departure of Georgy and 62 French citizens was blocked by the Iranians, who demanded the extradition of Bani Sadr and Rajavi and announced that Georgy was being expelled. Paul Depis was despatched by Mitterrand to negotiate the release of the French. Depis and Georgy returned with around 50 French citizens on August 12 ³³. In Iranian eyes, France had now become firmly the "Small Satan" alongside the US. Things were made worse when Iranian opposition figures seized hold of the Iranian patrol boats which had left Cherbourg for Iran, off the coast of Spain, and then sailed to Marseille under a monarchist flag ³⁴.

The crisis in Franco-Iranian relations of early August 1981 could not have been engineered. It was provoked above all by the decision of Bani Sadr and Rajavi to seek exile in France, thus enraging the Ayatollahs who were already ill-disposed to Paris due to French arms supplies to Iraq. Did the two Iranian opponents go to

³² Péan, 1988, p.108.

³³ L'Express, 14.8.81. Much was made of the initiative and skill of Depis and Georgy. Six years earlier, at the end of his six-year term as ambassador to Libya (see ch.3) Georgy had been at the centre of one of France's most famous "hostage-taking" episodes, when he negotiated the release of Françoise Claustre from Chad, Le Figaro, 13.8.81. Although Depis was one of the key "pro-Iraqi" figures in the French establishment, he had also established ties with Iranian clerics, notably when Khomeini was based in Iraq.

³⁴ Le Point 24.8.81.

France because they thought that France, because of its ties with Iraq, would support them? This seems unlikely given the uncertainty surround French policy in the aftermath of the Mitterrand's election. However, their reception in France, and the reaction this provoked in Iran, rupturing relations with Paris, proved exceedingly fortuitous both for the Iraqis, and for those in France who sought to boost French support for Iraq in its struggle against Iran. Troubled by what narrowly avoided being a "hostage crisis" akin to that experienced by the Americans in Iran, from August 1981 Mitterrand would more easily endorse the pro-Iraqi line increasingly argued for by many around him. *Between this time and early 1984, France would in effect be an unconditional ally and key arms supplier of Iraq in its struggle against Iran.*

6 French "pro-Iraqi" interests and continuity of policy.

The position of François Mitterrand, his party and ministers on arms sales was not clear when they came into office. As already indicated, Mitterrand had already made several statements against France's policy of arms exports during the presidential campaign. One of his first official functions was to open France's annual aeronautical trade fair at the Bourget aerodrome, where a stir was caused by the fact that overzealous officials decided that the planes he see be first disarmed. Yet in a meeting held in the foreign ministry in late May, a group of senior political and military experts reviewed the state of France's arms exports, orders and deliveries. At this meeting, both Charles Hernu and Claude Cheysson reportedly declared themselves to support the continue delivery of arms to Iraq. Notably discussions on an order for the advanced artillery pieces 155GCT (*Canon à grande cadence de tir*) was discussed, with agreement that the order should be pursued. The finance ministry noted both that Iraq had hitherto been a prompt payer for military orders, and that if the regime were to falter or fall due to reversals in its war with Iran, then French companies and the state's export credit guarantee department *COFACE*, would be in trouble.

With Franco-Iranian tension still running high, on August 18 the indefatigable Tariq Aziz arrived in Paris for his first visit since Mitterrand's election. Aziz met with Mitterrand and all of his senior ministers; Cheysson, Jobert (who, two months later

in October 1981 would become the first of Mitterrand's ministers to go to Baghdad) and Hernu at defence. Tariq Aziz's primary concern was that the existing orders placed, notably for Mirage F1 and the almost finalised contract for the 155-GCT guns be fulfilled as quickly as possible. Although Paris decided not to supply the advanced missile systems requested by Baghdad ³⁵ the other orders were fulfilled, with the contract for the 155-CGT signed in October. France's apparently unconditional support for Iraq greatly aided policy towards other Arab countries. In September Mitterrand paid a return visit to the King Khaled of Saudi Arabia, and in December defence minister Charles Hernu visited Saudi and the Emirates, signing a series of major arms contracts.

The pro-Iraqi stance of the foreign minister was reinforced by the appointment in 1981 of Paul Depis as ambassador to Iraq. Depis was close to Cheysson and had his own, extensive network of existing contacts in Baghdad. In the Quai d'Orsay, the pro-Iraq tendency was also reinforced by the presence of Eric Desmarest who assisted the new team and was appointed to Depis's old post. Desmarest had been a diplomatic aid to Hughes de l'Estoile in the DGA in the mid-1970s and had extensive experience of the politics of arms sales ³⁶. Thus from Michel Jobert's trip to Baghdad in October 1981, throughout 1982 Franco-Iraqi relations continued to be dominated by arms supplies and the continuation of the large civil construction projects begun under Giscard. The Franco-Iraqi joint commission on economic cooperation met in October 1982 in Paris. It was chaired by Michel Jobert and the Iraqi minister of petrol, Qasim Ahmed Taki ³⁷. However, by the beginning of 1983, the balance of power in the relationship had shifted. Baghdad, increasingly embattled and beleaguered in its war with Iran, found itself both increasingly in need of more, more sophisticated weaponry, while it was less able to pay either for the debts accumulated on existing arms deliveries, or for the new orders it wanted to place.

Tariq Aziz visited Paris in the first week of 1983. Again he was receive by Mitterrand and all the key ministers. Iran having reversed the military situation in

³⁵ The missile air-sol de moyenne portée ASMP, Angeli, 1992, p.108.

³⁶ Desmarest had close link to Chirac's entourage. In March 1986 he would go to Baghdad to assist the new ambassador, Maurice Courage. Angeli, 1992, p.118.

the middle of 1982, during the last quarter of the year, Iraq had stopped paying its debts. Aziz's primary aim was thus to reschedule debts to France. This would be achieved, after four months of arduous negotiation, by a complex arrangement whereby France agreed to offset Iraq debts against increased "purchases" of oil from Iraq, which in fact would be supplied by Saudi Arabia to France via Elf and Total. This triangular arrangement meant that in fact Saudi was paying Iraq's debts as an indirect financial support for Iraq in its war against Iran. Much of the complexity of the negotiations over the rescheduling of debts arose from disputes as to what price the oil should be valued at. Before the Iraqi vice-prime minister left Paris, he declared that "Nous avons trouvé avec le gouvernement français des dispositions sérieuses et pratiques pour résoudre a bref delai les difficultés provisoires que traverse l'Irak"³⁸. To the ire of the Iranians, while in Paris, Tariq Aziz also met with Massud Rajavi³⁹. While the Franco-Iraqi ties were constant, broader diplomatic shifts were also afoot. While in Paris, Tariq Aziz also met with the Egyptian foreign minister, Boutros Ghali, the first such meeting between Egyptian and Iraqi ministers since the Camp David accords. The US also began to treat Iraq more favourably from this point, according commercial credit to Iraq for the first time since 1967. When in Paris for further negotiation over Iraqi debts in May 1983, Tariq Aziz met with the American secretary of state, George Schultz⁴⁰.

By this time, Iraq's debts to France stood at around FFr15bn. However, COFACE's total exposure to Iraq stood at FFr35bn. It seems that at this point, the Iraqi dossier triggered a series of conflicts within the French state. The arms companies were adamant that Iraq should be accorded new credits to allow it to purchase further weaponry. Indeed the degree to which companies such as Dassault and Thompson were implicated in the actual fighting has probably been underestimated, a French weekly noting, no doubt with some exaggeration, that by early 1983 "Iraq's war had become partially a war of the strategies of French arms salesmen"⁴¹.

³⁷ Le Monde, 20.10.82.

³⁸ Libération, 8-9.1.83.

³⁹ Péan, 1988, p.114.

⁴⁰ Le Monde 14.5.83.

⁴¹ L'Express, 21.1.83.

The fact that this deal was not simply a bilateral one involving as it did complex barter and credit arrangements with Saudi Arabia, underlines the degree to which France's support for Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war cannot be understood simply in bilateral terms. Gulf Arab states were willing to conclude favourable deals with France on the strength of France's support, in terms of military equipment, for Baghdad. Tariq Aziz returned to Paris in early May to further discuss the rescheduling of Iraqi debts, having failed to come to an agreement, he returned to Paris ten days later, a deal being finally agreed on May 24 1983. Iraq agreed to pay FFr2.5bn outstanding debts in cash, with the remaining FFr6.5bn being settled in petrol, partly supplied by Saudi Arabia. France agreed to triple its purchase of Iraqi oil ⁴². A degree of secrecy was maintained over how exactly this petrol was to be purchased, but it appears that the two French oil giants, TOTAL and Elf were obliged by the French state to purchase the oil ⁴³. In August Paris agreed to accord Iraq additional commercial credits in order that French companies owed monies by the Iraq state could be paid ⁴⁴. Michel Jobert having quit the government earlier in the year, Edith Cresson replaced him as minister of external commerce and thus presided over the Franco-Iraqi joint commission on economic cooperation in Baghdad in November 1983. She reaffirmed France's commitment to Iraq, while trying to resolve the continued cash flow problems of French companies operating in the country ⁴⁵.

7 France's "loan" of five Super Etendard's to Iraq

In fact, Tariq Aziz's negotiation with France over the rescheduling of outstanding debts and the delivery of new arms occurred against a backdrop of a more significant and pressing issue for Baghdad, securing more advanced planes and missiles with which they could hit Iranian oil facilities in the Gulf. By 1982 General René Audran had become a leading figure in the international section of the *Délégation générale pour l'armement* DGA, by then headed by Henri Martre. As such he had made numerous visits to the Iraqi capital. There again in October 1982, Audran was asked by the Iraqis to try and find a solution to problems posed for the Iraqi army by the

⁴² Libération, 25.5.83.

⁴³ Les Echos, 30.5.83 and 23.6.83.

⁴⁴ Le Monde, 18 and 19.8.83.

fact that the advanced Mirage F1 fighters ordered by France would not be available for delivery for another three years. Iraq wanted to get hold of French Super Etendard planes equipped with Exocet missiles. These aircraft, supplied to the French Navy since 1977, had proved themselves in combat during the 1982 Falklands war, Argentinian pilots using Etendard's exocet's to devastating effect on the British Navy⁴⁶. Audran passed the request to the DGA and the cabinet. While Auroy and Hernu agreed to the idea, the problem was that Dassault no longer produced Super Etendards. The only way Iraq could obtain the planes would be if five planes could be "borrowed" from the French Navy's stock of 72 Etendards... In December 1982 Hernu told Hughes de L'Estoile, the former boss of the DGA who has since become director of international affairs for Dassault, that the Navy would temporarily "lend" Dassault back five of the Etendards that had been sold to them, in order that Dassault could then "temporarily" sell them to Iraq, until the Mirage F1s could be completed and delivered, when the Etendards would be returned to France...

This convoluted arrangement was discussed when Tariq Aziz came to Paris in January 1983, although at this point it remained secret. On February 1 1983 the leading French satirical weekly, *Le Canard Enchaîné* revealed the arrangement, code-named "Milan", although at that point the Canard's journalists did not realize the extent of the scam, believing that the Etendards were being sold to Iraq⁴⁷. Paradoxically the revelation of the deal to supply Etendards to Baghdad further boosted France's standing in the Gulf among Iraq's allies. As the deal was revealed in February 1983, Hernu and Cheysson were embarking on a tour of Egypt, Saudi, Jordan and Kuwait. They received praise for their support of Iraq. France's flexibility vis-à-vis Iraq helped win new arms contracts in the Gulf; Abu Dhabi negotiating to purchase the next generation of Dassault fighters; the Mirage-2000, which Iraq was also now expressing interest in, and Kuwait buying Mirage F1 and Exocet missiles⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ Le Monde 15.11.83.

⁴⁶ <http://www.dassault-aviation.fr/group/history/esetenda.htm>

⁴⁷ Both Claude Angeli and Pierre Péan worked on the Canard. Angeli's 1992 book with Stéphanie Mesnier, colleague and confidant of Angeli's on the paper, stemmed in large part from having covered the successive *affaires* connected to Franco-Iraqi ties. Interview with Angeli, June 1996.

⁴⁸ Angeli, 1992, p.128.

The exact process whereby France decided to deliver the Etendards to Iraq is both convoluted and controversial. From the available evidence, it is clear that there were grave doubts both in some sections of the administration, and with the President and his immediate entourage about the wisdom of the move. Once the negotiations had been revealed in February, other Arab states pushed France hard to deliver the planes, believing, with some justification, that this would shift the strategic balance in Iraq's favour. When Mitterrand made a state visit to Morocco in late January 1983, Hassan II lobbied him to deliver the planes. There was resistance from the French Navy, who were reluctant to let their planes go. However, Dassault clearly favoured the deal, arguing persuasively and forcefully that if France did *not* agree to the Etendard loan, then Iraq might renege on its Mirage F1 order, for which the Etendards were simply a temporary substitute ⁴⁹. The actual contract between Iraq and Dassault for the supply of the planes was signed in Paris in June 2 1983, with payment being made three weeks later. However, the deal then ran into diplomatic resistance from the US, who feared that this would greatly escalate the war, the US circulating all of its Arab Gulf allies with warnings about the issue. Mitterrand then hesitated for several months, with many, including people who were hitherto strong supporters of Iraq, now being far more cautious, acknowledging the magnitude of the act. However, Claude Cheysson remains strongly in favour of the deal, and the Iraqis were increasingly uneasy about the delay. In late September 1983 Cheysson accompanied Mitterrand to the UN General Assembly. There the US secretary of state Shultz nuanced the US's reservations, apparently easing Mitterrand's doubts over the delivery. As the two Frenchmen left the UN, Mitterrand apparently gave Cheysson the green light. The planes left France a week later, October 5 1983 ⁵⁰. Ironically, both French and Iraqi officials then threw up a smokescreen of disinformation, presumably in an attempt to deflect possible criticism and confuse the Iranians. In Paris Cheysson suddenly became uncharacteristically vague and evasive about the planes. While in Baghdad, on October 10, with the Etendards presumably already having arrived in Iraq, Saddam Hussein called together 32 French journalists to bitterly complain about France's hesitations and reluctance to assist Iraq. The

⁴⁹ Angeli, 1992, p.129.

⁵⁰ Angeli's account of this is so precise (p.134), it can presumably only have come from either Cheysson himself, or one of his closest advisors.

ruse did not dupe the Iranians. The French chargé d'affaires in Tehran was told in no uncertain terms that the Iranians saw the delivery of the planes as a hostile act.

The Super Etendard episode is important for three reasons: two linked to French policy in the region itself, one to the longer term analysis and understanding of that policy.

- Firstly it became symbol (an *image d'Epinal par excellence* – if you like) in popular imagination of Franco-Iraqi relations, French state bent over backwards to bend and break the rules to help the Iraqis, with the line between government (President and ministers), the state's aeronautical apparatus (the DGA) and private sector (Dassault) became a fiction. It was most tangible example of France as effectively Iraq's ally, and as such became a *cause célèbre*.

- Secondly, as shall be seen below, the supply of the five planes had, as the Iraqis hoped, both a practical and psychological impact on the war. Their presence helped alter the strategic balance in the war. The planes and missiles allowed Iraq to strike at the Kharg petrol terminal, thus cutting Iran's source of foreign earnings, and thus its ability to purchase arms. As such, from mid-1983 Iran saw ever more clearly that their enemy was France as well as Iraq, and then, via allies and proxies, began attacking French targets, first in Lebanon, then in France itself. For France, the counterpart of what became known euphemistically as *co-belligerence* with Iraq against Iran was a relationship with Iran conducted via terrorism and hostage taking as Iran attempted, eventually with some success, to exert indirect leverage on France.

- Thirdly, the supply of Super Etendards and Exocets to Iraq in 1983 has been used in subsequent literature on French foreign policy as a key example of the lack of control that politicians exercise over its "military industrial lobby". Given the polemics and controversy over the unorthodox Etendard arrangement, sufficient evidence about the issue has been made public to allow analysis. Some have seized on the episode to argue the power of such a lobby⁵¹. Others, most notably Samy Cohen whose works on French foreign policy analysis have been referred to earlier in this study, have argued that the opposite is true, and that the Etendard affair was

⁵¹ Marion, P. *Le Pouvoir sans visage : le complexe militaro-industriel*, Calmann-Lévy, Paris, 1990. Guisnel, J. *Les Généraux : enquête sur le pouvoir militaire en France*, la Découverte, Paris, 1990.

very clearly conceived and driven by the politicians ⁵². This debate will be returned to in the conclusion.

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⁵² Cohen, S. La défaite des généraux : le pouvoir politique et l'armée sous la Ve République, Fayard, Paris, 1994.

Chapter 7. 1984-90: “normalisation” with Iran and hostages in Lebanon, Iraqi debt, arms sales and *cohabitation*.

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Introduction

- 1 The Iranian backlash
- 2 Roland Dumas and the reopening of relations with Iran
- 3 The continuation of arms supplies to Iraq
- 4 1986-88; cohabitation in France, hostages in Lebanon
- 5 Franco-Iraqi relations during *cohabitation*; oil, debt and arms.
- 6 France’s “Iraqi” lobbies in the mid-eighties
- 7 “Post-war ... pre-war” relations, 1988-90; Chevènement and Dassault.

Conclusion

Introduction

This text has already stressed several times that Franco-Iraqi relations cannot be understood uniquely from a bilateral perspective. Examples provided in earlier chapters included the way in which the fluctuations in both Franco-Algerian and Franco-Israeli relations in the sixties paved the way for the flourishing of France's ties with Arab states in the seventies, and how subsequently the Franco-Iraqi relationship came to be viewed in Paris as being the keystone of a broader Arab and Mediterranean policy. Chapter six also stressed the degree to which the French ties with Baghdad after the start of the Iran:Iraq war in 1980 locked France ever closer to Iraq, as Paris' support for Iraq was warmly encouraged, initially by conservative Arab Gulf states, and then the US and other OECD states.

The manner in which policy towards Iraq increasing intermeshed and overlapped with France's convoluted ties with *other* Middle Eastern states dramatically increased in the mid-eighties. Iranian hostility to France, sparked by its support for Iraq in the war, created a host of new problems, most pointedly bomb attacks against civilian targets in France and hostage-taking in Lebanon. *This "intermeshing and overlapping" of diverse strands of French foreign policy, most of which can ultimately be traced back to the ties with Iraq outlined in earlier chapters, creates a daunting set of analytical and chronological problems in terms of how to narrate and evaluate the course of the Franco-Iraqi relationship in the mid-1980s.* This is especially so as during this period the overlapping Middle East policy dossiers increasingly became the subject of intense *domestic* political rivalry in France. Clearly a dissection of such rivalry and how it underpinned, motivated and shaped leading French politicians' beliefs, analyses and decisions ought to be central to an evaluation of policy during this period. However, this is easier said than done. Faced with the complexity of the interlinked dossiers and the multiplicity of actors, this final chapter simply tries to provide a general sketch of the issues, while identifying the multiplicity of actors.

For the purposes of analysis, the *domestic* political rivalry referred to above can be separated into three strands: firstly electoral struggles between right and left wing politicians, firstly in the run-up to the March 1986 legislative elections, and then again in the mid-1988 presidential campaign. Secondly the tussle over foreign policy between the right-wing government and president Mitterrand during the initial period of *cohabitation*. Between the elections of March 1986 and June 1988, for the first time in the Fifth Republic, a president of the left, Mitterrand, ruled alongside a government of the right, headed by Chirac. Particularly in the domain of foreign and defense policy, this pitched the ship of state into uncharted and frequently choppy constitutional waters. Nowhere was this more problematically so than in the conflicting undercurrents of policy towards the Middle East and its interface with domestic policy via terrorism in France and outcry at home over the detention of French hostages in Lebanon. The third strand of domestic rivalry was the struggle *within and between* ministers and associated factions of Jacques Chirac's administration. This was most acutely so as Middle Eastern related terrorism in France, and much of the negotiations over French hostages held in Lebanon, came to be controlled by Chirac's powerful interior minister, Charles Pasqua.

Evidently this final chapter cannot satisfactorily illuminate all of these issues. Rather it attempts to narrate key events and issues of the period in terms of how they relate to the Franco-Iraqi dossier. In doing so it tries to highlight the evolution of and inflections in some of the themes presented in earlier chapters. Clearly the period of *cohabitation* is of crucial importance for the broader analysis of Fifth Republic foreign policy decision making, both because of its unprecedented constitutional character and the fact that policy divisions became more visible due to rivalry within the administration. Two subsequent periods of *cohabitation* in the nineties have largely served to obscure the uncharted, unprecedented nature of the 1986-88 period. In retrospect it is easy to forget or downplay the degree to which in early 1986 the onset of *cohabitation* was viewed as a crisis and a threat to Fifth Republic foreign policy.

This final chapter is divided into seven main sections. The first examines the Iranian backlash to France's unbridled support for Iraq; elaborating on the increased military

supplies and easing of credit terms offered to Iraq which were outlined in chapter six. The second section presents the result of Iran's hostility to France, Mitterrand's attempts from 1984, particularly via his new foreign minister Roland Dumas, to "normalise" relations with Iran. Section three then looks at the continuation of French arms supplies to Iraq. Section four provides a schematic overview of the reconfiguration of French foreign policy which occurred due to *cohabitation*. Several politicians who had been deeply involved in oil and defense policy towards the region in the seventies returned to office. These included Chirac himself as premier, André Giraud at defense and Jean-Bernard Raimond as foreign minister. The unprecedented political configuration of *cohabitation* was accompanied by an escalation of the convoluted and brutal fall-out from the contradictions of earlier policy towards Iran and Iraq. These side-effects of Middle Eastern policy, were on the one hand attacks on French targets and the seizing of French hostages in Lebanon, and on the other violence which terrorised mainland France during 1986. By the time of the presidential election of June 1988 these attacks had created an extraordinarily complex and chaotic policy environment as Jacques Chirac and his interior minister Charles Pasqua, undertook frenetic, but ultimately successful efforts to obtain the release of French hostages from Lebanon.

Section five then examines the principal issues which shaped Franco-Iraqi relations during 1986-88. These revolved around the issue of debt and arms supplies. A brief examination of the debates and divisions *within* the Chirac administration provides some insights both into the weight and continuity of Chirac's own adhesion to the Iraq link, and the actual mechanisms of policy making on this central foreign policy dossier, which had significant implications for several key ministries. Section six then returns to the issue of lobbies and those pushing for closer Iraqi ties in the mid-1980s. Section seven highlights how, notwithstanding opposition from the bulk of the Socialist government and the ministry of finance, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, the new minister of defense, and Dassault attempted, with little success to reactivate and upgrade relations and sell ever more sophisticated weaponry to Baghdad. Although this text evidently focuses on France, both this final chapter and the conclusion which follows it, stress how, following the end of the Iran-Iraq war in August 1988, similar balancing acts of simultaneously trying to retrieve debts and

gain a share of what promised to be an exceedingly lucrative post-war Iraqi market, were mirrored in the UK, Germany and other OECD states. It was the (unannounced) switch in policy in 1988 in the UK which ultimately led in 1992 to the Scott enquiry and report. The information produced in the course of what remains to date by far the most meticulous analysis of UK foreign policy decision making, has a surprising number of points in common with the French saga narrated here. This is most particularly so in the conflicting aims of the commercial and wider diplomatic and regional aspects of policy objectives.¹

1 The Iranian backlash

The background to Iran's rupture in relations with France in August 1981 was narrated in chapter six. As France continued to deliver weapons to Iraq, so Iran was consistently critical of Paris's stance in the war during 1981-83. Attacks on diverse French interests in the Middle East had occurred during this period, but these had not been linked systematically to France's stance in the Gulf war. During the crisis of August 1981, an initial attack on a French target in Beirut occurred. A month later, on September 4, the French ambassador to Lebanon, Louis Delamare, was killed, apparently in a botched kidnap attempt, with a view to exchanging him for Bani Sadr and Rajavi². On April 15 1982 the head of the *Direction générale de la sécurité et de la défense* (DGSE, France's external intelligence agency) in Lebanon and his wife were killed in Beirut. During the summer of 1983, against the backdrop of the possible delivery of Etendard planes and Exocet missiles to Iraq, France's relations with Iran became far more tense. Matters were aggravated by the fact that on July 6 six opponents of Khomeini hijacked an Iranian Boeing 707 and flew it to Paris's Orly airport, where the opposition leader Massoud Rajavi – with the blessing of France's interior minister - negotiated the release of the passengers. Shortly afterwards, a bomb exploded at the Air France desk in Baghdad airport. French intelligence (DGSE) reports began to suggest that Iran would plan a broader campaign of attacks against French targets. In Tehran in late August, an

¹ I attempted an overview of these comparisons when beginning this thesis. Styan, D. "French and British trade and arms sales to Iraq, 1980-91; contrasting attitudes and raising questions", paper to the EURASMES conference, Aix, July 1996, pp.21.

² Péan, *La Menace*, Fayard, Paris, 1988, p.109-110.

Air France plane was hijacked within Iran, the assailants demanding French withdrawal from Lebanon and a halt to French arms supplies to Iraq. A then little known Shia group “Amal” – led by Hussein Mussawi - claimed responsibility for the hijacking, which ended peacefully. In late September anti-French sentiment in Iran was further heightened as numerous leaders warned of the dangers of introducing new weaponry into the region which could threaten Iran’s oil exports – i.e. the Etendards. France seems to have been well aware of these threats, not least because they were relayed to Paris by Nicolas Lang, the advisor to the Worms Bank who had been instrumental in assisting France’s first contacts with Iraq in the late sixties (see chapter 3 section 11). By now Lang had excellent contacts also with key figures in the Iranian state, notably Mohamed Sadek, an aide to Rafiqdust, the head of the *Pasdaran* ³.

Once the Etendards were delivered in early October, the Iranian riposte was not slow coming. On October 23, a truck driven by a suicide bomber smashed into the Drakkar building housing the French contingent in Beirut. The bomb killed 58 French troops. A simultaneous attack on the US marine building left 241 dead ⁴. The following night Mitterrand and a small group of staff, including Hubert Védrine and François de Grossouvre, flew to Beirut. The visit was historic, and deeply paradoxical. De Gaulle, who had put Lebanon at the centre of much of his analysis and action in the Levant, had never visited as head of state. De Gaulle’s adversary Mitterrand thus became the first French head of state to visit Lebanon, arriving in catastrophe, the physical and human wreckage of his Middle Eastern policy around him ⁵.

After intense consultation between diverse French and American intelligence agencies, within a fortnight it became evident that Mussawi’s Shia grouping Amal had carried out the attack, and that Amal’s links were above all with Tehran. Determined to meet force with force, France staged two responses to the attack. The first was a bodged attempt,

³ Péan, 1988, p.117.

⁴ Fisk, R. *Pity the Nation*, André Deutsch, London 1990, pp.511-20. Intriguingly Fisk notes (p. 516) that the CIA had received a report on a possible attack, from an operative in a Paris café...

⁵ The image of Mitterrand in the ruins of Drakkar became one of the most poignant of his presidency. The coup de théâtre of the Beirut visit bears comparison with Mitterrand’s arrival in Sarajevo in 1992. Favier, P. Martin-Roland, M. 1991, vol.2 pp.30-45.

by French intelligence operatives in Lebanon to destroy the Iranian embassy at Jnah in the southern suburb of Beirut. The French jeep packed with explosive failed to explode. Secondly, on November 17 nine planes took off from the aircraft carrier *Clemenceau* (the same which had refuelled the 5 “Iraqi” Etendards on their journey from France six weeks earlier) in the Eastern Mediterranean and bombed the barracks of the Hezbollah movement in the Baalbek valley – though the bombs largely missed their target. The attack was initially planned as a joint riposte with the US, but the Americans backed out⁶. The previous day an Israeli raid had bombed an Amal base, leaving 30 dead. Over the following months, sporadic attacks against French members of UNIFIL escalated. At the end of December both France and Iran expelled diplomats. Although Charles Hernu, defence minister was despatched to Lebanon by Mitterrand for Christmas, this was little comfort as in the first two weeks of January a further series of attacks were staged against French personnel in Lebanon.

2 Roland Dumas and the reopening relations with Iran

While French troops withdrew from the UN force in Lebanon at the end of March 1984, relations between France and Iran remained fraught. In July 1984 the government of Pierre Mauroy was replaced by that of Laurent Fabius. Fabius was immediately confronted by the problem posed by France’s support for Iraq, and by the end of July had set the wheels in motion to try and start, if not to reverse, then at least to “re-equilibrate” France’s stance towards the two belligerents in the Gulf. Roland Dumas, Fabius’ minister for European affairs, and a close personal friend of Mitterrand’s would be instrumental in this effort.

In late July 1984 a French Airbus flying from Frankfurt was hijacked by Revolutionary Guards, who held 60 hostages on the tarmac in Tehran. The hijackers demanded the release of the Iranians held in French jails for their part in the bungled attempt to kill Shapour Bakhtiar in 1980. In fact Iranians officials had already attempted to negotiate

⁶ Favier, P. Martin-Roland, M. La décennie Mitterrand. Seuil 1991, vol 2 les épreuves (1984-88), p.40.

the release of Bakhtiar's assailants, headed by Anis Nakkash, in 1981. Their release was to henceforth be a central issue in Franco-Iranian relations, not least because Nakkash was a close friend of Rafiqdust, the head of the Revolutionary Guards. Fabius charged Dumas to attempt a negotiation with the Iranians in Paris, Dumas discussing with Iran's chargé d'affaires in Paris; Ali Velyati, the possible ways in which the Nakkash affair might be resolved ⁷. A verbal "understanding" seems to have been reached on Nakkash in Paris between Dumas and Velyati, and the French hostages in Tehran were released. Formally, the Franco-Iranian dossier now contained three major issues, Nakkash's release, the return of the \$1bn Eurodif loan made by the Shah in 1975, and the halting of arms supplies to Iraq. However, a fourth element of the equation was to play a role; although not known at the time, France also began to secretly supply weapons to Iran in what would become known as the Luchaire affair ⁸. Aides from the DGA and Hernu's ministry of Defence began to make discreet journeys to Iran in mid-1984 ⁹. By the time Mitterrand made a visit to President Assad of Syria in late November 1984, France was hoping that relations with Iran could be smoothed. Cheysson, who had long been perceived as the most partisan of those within the administration favouring privileged relations with Baghdad, was replaced by Roland Dumas in December 1984. Yet those Iranians with whom Dumas had discussed in July had become disenchanted by the time of his appointment in December. A member of the Revolutionary Guards who had arrived in France on a mission to purchase arms in September had been arrested at Orly, before being returned to Tehran; both Rafiqdust and Rafsanjani felt betrayed by France, and were little reassured by the replacement of Cheysson by Dumas.

On January 25 1985 René Audran, head of the DGA's industrial unit who had responsibility for exports to Iraq was killed outside his house in the Paris suburb of St Cloud. Although the attack was widely imputed to *Action directe*, members of French security services subsequently suggested that Iranian agents may have been behind the

⁷ Péan, 1988, p.128.

⁸ In March 1987 the French press revealed that since 1985 arms bound for Iran had been leaving Cherbourg. Further enquiries revealed substantial deliveries of arms to Tehran via a Paris-based company named Luchaire, using false end-user certificates. *Quotidien de Paris*, 3.3.86.

⁹ Villeneuve, C. Péret, J.-P. *Histoire secrète du terrorisme: les juges de l'impossible*, Plon, Paris, 1987.

attack and presented it as the first indication of an escalation of Iranian hostility towards French interests ¹⁰. Two months later, on March 22 1985 a new chapter opened in the saga of France's involvement in the Iran-Iraq conflict. That day in Beirut two Frenchmen, the vice-consul Marcel Fontaine and an attaché at the embassy Marcel Carton were kidnapped; Carton's daughter Dominique Pérez was also seized. Responsibility for the kidnapping was claimed by Islamic Jihad, who demanded the suspension of France's triangular barter deal with Saudi Arabian oil and the Mirage F1's for Iraq. Although Pérez was soon released, any hope that it might be an isolated incident evaporated when other French nationals were seized two months later. Noted researcher Michel Seurat and journalist Jean-Paul Kauffman were seized in separate parts of Beirut on May 22 1985. French policy in the region would remain a prisoner to the hostage taking for the next three years as Iran's tussle with France over France's support for Iraq was increasingly played out in Lebanon and via terrorism in France itself.

Another Frenchman, Gilles Sydney Peyrolles had been kidnapped the day after Carton and Fontaine, on 23.3.85. His capture was claimed by a group by the name of *Fractions armées révolutionnaires libanaises* (FARL) Peyrolles was released two weeks later after negotiations via Algerian intermediaries. In exchange for this promises appear to have been made on the release of George Ibrahim Abdullah, a Lebanese held on terrorism charges in France ¹¹. While Peyrolles was released, the kidnapping of Kauffmann in particular increased pressure on the French authorities. From June 1985 campaigns in France, notably via Kauffmann's wife Joelle greatly increased the public profile of the hostage issue. It is now clear that Roland Dumas and his entourage entered into detailed negotiations with Iranian, Syrian and Lebanese intermediaries in order to secure the release of the hostage during autumn 1985, and that a detailed mechanism to exchange Anis Nakkash and almost certainly French arms supplies to Tehran, for the hostages was

¹⁰ Favier, P. Martin-Roland, M. La décennie Mitterrand. Seuil 1991, vol 2 les épreuves (1984-88), p.523.

¹¹ Peyrolles, cultural attaché in Tripoli is the son of noted French author, Gilles Perrault (see introduction, fn 17). Promises apparently made but not honoured during the release of Abdullah would greatly complicate the Franco:Iranian-Syrian dossier the following year.

in place in January 1986 ¹². As will be explained in section 4 below, these attempts failed. This was due in part to the complexity of the negotiations and the unreliability of the intermediaries used, who failed to fully master the fraught Iranian-Syrian channels of communication. In addition, it subsequently became clear that right wing politicians in France, mindful that legislative elections were due in March 1986, successfully managed to persuade Iranian and Lebanese interests *not* to release the hostages to Dumas.

3 The continuation of arms sales to Iraq

The agreement hammered out between Tariq Aziz and the French authorities early in 1983 established the principles and framework which guided relations over the subsequent five years. The deal allowed Iraq to continue to receive French armaments in exchange for repayment of at least some of Iraq's growing debts to French interests, primarily via oil supplied to and sold by Elf and Total. Notwithstanding the reopening of relations with Tehran under Roland Dumas, these triangular Franco-Iraqi ties (arms-debt-oil) continued. Iraq's vice-president Yassine Ramadan came to Paris in February 1984 in an attempt to secure further concessions on debt repayment. Edith Cresson, who took over from Michel Jobert as minister of external trade in March 1983 visited Iraq in July 1984 in order to negotiate payment of arrears owed to French civil contractors and bolster a French bid for the upgrading of Baghdad airport. In September 1985 Dassault signed an agreement to supply Iraq a further 24 Mirage F1 planes. A month later, as if to re-emphasise to the Iraqi authorities that France's reopening of ties with Iran was not to be at the expense of its relations with Iraq, Roland Dumas himself went to Baghdad.

Thus it must be stressed that, while Mitterrand and Dumas strove to re-establish ties with Iran from 1984 (a policy which would initially be adopted and reinforced by Chirac's government from March 1986), this was *not* at the expense of Franco-Iraqi ties. These continued largely unchanged, most particularly in the military sphere. It was evident at the time, and is more starkly so with the benefit of hindsight, that this led to a series of grave policy inconsistencies. The violence against French interests, first in

¹² Favier, P. Martin-Roland, 1991, vol 2, p.535.

Lebanon, and then in mainland France via a series of terrorist attacks from late 1985 to autumn 1986 were the product of these contradictions. The inconsistencies themselves in part stemmed from the long-term nature of the arms supply relationship. This raises the question of the degree to which links with France's leading aeronautical companies were actually driving policy. This in turn links to the broader debate as to the power and influence of "military industrial" interests in the formulation of Fifth Republic policy, to which I'll return in the conclusion.

The blurring of France's military and diplomatic stance

France's supply of Super Etendard planes to Iraq in 1983, the circumstances of which were narrated in chapter six, clearly assisted Iraq's position in the war with Iran, allowing Baghdad to strike deeper into Iran and reach its offshore oil platforms in the Gulf, thus partially depriving Tehran of the ability to export oil and earn foreign exchange. Evidently the "loan" of these Super Etendards was in place of the delivery of Mirage F1s ordered by Iraq in the late seventies. Specially equipped long-range Mirage F1 strike aircraft were delivered to Iraq by early 1986.

By the period 1984-86, despite the nuances of diplomacy and the desire of President and ministers to try and minimise the destructive fall-out from the Franco-Iraqi relationship by improving relations with Iran, practical policy appeared to be beyond their immediate control. This was for two interrelated reasons linked to the nature of arms supplies. Firstly arms deals have a very long lead time, particularly the increasingly sophisticated weapons systems ordered by Iraq from 1980 onwards. The increased computerisation and sophistication of weapons systems, notably Mirage planes and their associated missile systems, meant ever-longer research, development and production times. The versions of the Mirage F1s made for the Iraqis had not been produced for the French air force. Added to the sophistication of the weaponry, the sheer volume of armament systems and advanced munitions meant that France's military-industrial sector had a very substantial presence in Iraq by the mid-eighties. Its presence greatly outnumbered, and thus largely overshadowed France's formal diplomatic presence in the country.

Even if the diplomats in Baghdad had wanted to scale back the military links - and there is no evidence to suggest they did, rather the contrary - it is clear this would have been practically difficult. Dozens of missions and many hundreds of technicians from Dassault, Matra, Aérospatiale and their multitudinous subcontractors were in Iraq at any one time in the mid-eighties; many were expressly forbidden from having contact with the French embassy. The arms companies, and those who, in the DGA and other state bodies charged with coordinating arms sales, exports and research in Paris, were usually far more numerous, powerful, better connected and indeed better informed than individuals attached to the Quai d'Orsay or presidency. Those in the French embassy in Baghdad acknowledged the power and influence of the military interests, stating to Angeli "we were waging war without admitting it. The government was poorly informed. They didn't always know what was going on the ground". Even the ambassador conceded that "those in the arms industry perhaps went beyond the limits fixed by the politicians" ¹³.

During this period a growing volume of increasingly sophisticated and expensive weaponry was being sold to Iraq. Clearly the French were not alone in this. While this text dwells on the French dimension of the arming of Iraq, it should not be forgotten that this was just one facet of what became an increasingly sophisticated and voracious military procurement programme in the mid-eighties, making Iraq the largest single importer of military goods in the world ¹⁴. Yet France had two advantages over their European and other competitors. Firstly, as narrated in earlier chapters, they already had good and longstanding ties with Iraq's military. Secondly, France could offer the advanced technology, particularly in guided weapons systems, not available from Asian or South American competitors. Thus in 1982 a decision was taken that the Mirage F1 ordered by Iraq two years previously, should be reconfigured from their general combat specifications and be transformed into air-to-surface attack planes. No French air force planes had these specifications and the contract for these alterations signed in 1982 required three years R&D. It was for this reason that the Super Etendard planes were

¹³ Angeli 1992, p.152. Though not named in the text, the ambassador in question is Paul Depis.

¹⁴ Timmerman, K. The death lobby, Houghton-Mifflin, Boston 1992. Darwish, A. Alexander C.

“lent” in 1983. The modified Iraqi Mirage F1 had more sophisticated electronic communications equipment (manufactured by Thomson) and a far greater missile carrying capacity than the standard French model. It was able to fire two Exocet missiles as well as the advanced laser-guided AS30L (laser) missile manufactured by Aérospatiale. As with the Mirage planes, the complexity of the AS30L was such that the research, development and production of the missile took two years. AS30Ls were ordered by Iraq in 1982 and first delivered in 1984. A total of 596 such missiles were ordered, although only 240 had been produced and delivered by the time of the end of the Iran:Iraq war in 1988. As well as Aérospatiale’s Exocet and AS30L, Iraq was also a key client for their Roland ground to air system as well as Milan and Hot anti-tank missiles. Thomson sold Crotale ground to air missiles and Matra air to air Magic missiles.

France also supplied Iraq with the artillery piece which was regarded by many analysts as being the critical element in reversing Iranian ground assaults. Iran’s superiority in its numbers of total ground troops was checked by Iraq’s extensive use of the French high velocity CGT155 (CGT standing for (*Canon à*) *grande cadence de tir*). French military personnel regularly visited Iraq to demonstrate, test and maintain weapons systems. In June 1985 four French soldiers were killed when a CGT155 prototype exploded during a firing demonstration in Iraq. French trainers evidently flew innumerable flights with Iraqi pilots in both the Etendard and Mirage F1 planes. It is not just the question of division between French and Iraqi technical capacity which is blurred. When, during 1986, Iraqi Mirage F1 planes struck deep into Iran, hitting Iranian oil platforms in the Gulf up to 1000km from Baghdad, in-flight refuelling for the F1s was undertaken under French supervision from bases in the Emirates, where Dassault had extensive links, having supplied planes and technical assistance to Kuwait, UAE and Qatar. The Mirage F1s enabled Iraq to strike far deeper into Iran. The escalation of the air campaign against Iran, conducted in large part with French technology, occurred between early 1986 and October. The Kharg terminal was hit in February 1986 and by October towns in south west Iran, notably the terminal of Larrak and oil installations in

the Gulf itself had been damaged by bombing raids. Dassault, Thomson and Matra were able to use the combat tested Iraqi experience to market and sell both hardware and munitions to other potential clients, using combat video footage shot during Iraqi raids in their sales pitches, rather than simulations used by British, US and other competitors¹⁵.

4 1986-88; *cohabitation* in France, hostages in Lebanon

The period early 1986 to mid-1988 is one of the most convoluted and confused of any in the four decades of Fifth Republic policy in terms of the ramifications of various Middle Eastern dossiers stemming from relations with Iraq. This is primarily because foreign and domestic policy became increasingly dominated by two primary, and numerous subsidiary, by-products of Franco-Iraqi ties. The two primary effects were the closely inter-linked objectives of releasing French hostages from Lebanon and re-establishing relations with Iran during the period. Before providing what can be little more than an outline sketch of the key elements of these policies it is worth highlighting what appear, in retrospect to be three observations on French policy in the period which have bearing on the overall themes of this thesis.

- Prior to the mid-1980s, French Middle Eastern policy had not been a major issue on the French domestic political stage. As narrated in chapters two and three, the only partial exception to this was over the Israeli-Palestinian issue, notably in the late sixties. In the mid-1980s this public indifference to, or ignorance of the importance of policy in the Middle East, was abruptly shattered. This was because there was an increasingly explicit overlapping of foreign and domestic politics stemming from French policy in the Middle East. This was largely due to the role of public opinion, inflamed by publicity over the plight of French hostages in Lebanon and bomb attacks on civilians in France.

¹⁵ As already noted, the battle proven efficiency of the Exocet missiles during the Malvinas/Falklands war of 1982 had been one of its chief selling points. Curiously, though unsurprisingly, following the 1990 war, in public French producers fell silent about the Iraqi successes of their supplies.

- The merging of foreign and domestic policy dossiers greatly complicates the task of analysis and evaluation. Public opinion meant that considerable political capital came to be invested in the hostages. Therefore attempts by French politicians to release, *and block the release*, of French hostages held in Lebanon, as well as to obtain an end or respite to the bombing campaigns in mainland France, came to be perceived by rival French politicians and their advisors as a means of winning votes. This was deftly exploited by France's partners in the Middle East. Factions in or seeking power in Iran, Syria and Lebanon were all able to exploit such internal political rivalry in France. As already noted, there were divisions between different arms of French state, notably the foreign and interior ministries, but also the judiciary (responsible for the investigation of attacks in France, and the conditions of detention and release of Middle Eastern prisoners whose release was sought by those in Lebanon and Iran) and the diverse intelligence services. In addition the numerous personal envoys of French political factions – some of themselves French nationals of Middle Eastern origin – both facilitated and further complicated communication between France and the region.

Evidently this text concentrates on and attempts to isolate French policy from Middle Eastern issues. However, a more nuanced and complete picture of French policy would emerge by examining France's relations with its western allies over diverse Middle Eastern issues in the mid-1980s. For example the manner in which France differentiated itself from the US, Britain and other European allies over policy towards Syria, notably in mid-1987, and the role of France's refusal to allow US jets to use French airspace en-route to attack Libya in April 1986¹⁶. Evidently there is also the broader issue from mid-1987 of attempts within the UN Security Council to secure a ceasefire in the Gulf war.

Elections and cohabitation; February-March 1986

¹⁶ . Raimond, J.-B. *Le Quai d'Orsay à l'épreuve de la cohabitation*, Flammarion, Paris, 1989, p.74. Raimond presents the US raid on Libya as the first real test of *cohabitation* foreign policy; stressing that Chirac and Mitterrand had little difficulty in agreeing policy, and shared the same frustration over contradictory US policy towards Libya, particularly given France's own engagement in Chad.

March 1986 marks a watershed in both the constitutional history of the Fifth Republic and the making of French foreign policy as, following the victory of the right-wing RPR-UDF group in the legislative elections of March 1986, a left-wing President, Mitterrand, had to cohabit with a right-wing administration. Yet, as when Mitterrand came to power in 1981, this unprecedented break with previous practice, led not to a significant change, but essentially to continuity in the direction of foreign policy.

Continuity was in part due to personnel, whereas in 1981 there were completely new teams of presidential and ministerial advisors, in March 1986 presidential advisors stayed and the incoming right-wing government was composed on the whole of Gaullist politicians who had extensive ministerial experience. This was true not only of foreign affairs in general, but of oil, arms, Arab and Iraqi dossiers in particular. The role of Jacques Chirac in cementing the special relationship with Saddam Hussein via reciprocal visits in 1974-76 was noted in chapter five. In addition, two key members of his administration, André Giraud as minister of defense, and Jean-Bernard Raimond at foreign affairs, were both influential members of the oil milieu.

In terms of Middle Eastern policy, the final days of the socialist government were marked by increasingly frantic attempts to secure the release of the four French hostages from Lebanon. Joelle Kauffmann's campaigning on behalf of her husband and co-detainees had successfully raised the profile of the hostages. The faces of the hostages were broadcast nightly prior to the evening news and their plight had been elevated to a major issue in the campaign during February. In early February, Paris was shaken by the first of what was to be a series of terrorist attacks. These were claimed by a group calling itself the *Comité de solidarité avec les prisonniers politiques arabes et du Moyen-Orient* (CPPSA). This convoluted nomenclature was necessitated by its aims, the release of George Ibrahim Abdullah and two non-Arab colleagues, Anis Nakkash, and a colleague of his by the name of Varabidjan. In a pre-electoral climate increasingly dominated by concerns of "terrorism" and security, interior minister Pierre Joxe and his internal intelligence service (DST) subsequently arrested a series of suspected Middle Eastern militants living in France. Over 50 people were arrested on February 12.

However, in what proved one of the more contorted and highly contested “errors” ever made in the murky world of French police and intelligence work, two of those arrested were Iraqis opposed to the government in Baghdad with established connections to those in power in Tehran. Threatened with expulsion the two men, Fawzi Hamza and Hassan Kheireddine requested to be sent to Britain and Paraguay respectively. London and Montevideo refused to allow the men to enter and on February 19 the men were instead put on a plane to Baghdad. Thus, at the very moment when the French authorities were seeking to placate Tehran and win their assistance to release French hostages from Lebanon, they sent two men with close links to Iran into the hands of their worst enemy, Iraq... As the most comprehensive historical overview of the period notes; "plus qu'une bavure administrative, ces expulsions constituent une énorme erreur politique et diplomatique. Elles font l'effet d'une provocation a' l'égard de l'Iran" ¹⁷. Shortly afterwards, Amnesty International announced, incorrectly, that one of the two had been executed in Baghdad. Meanwhile in Beirut on March 8 four additional French hostages were seized, members of an *Antenne 2* film crew who had been sent to investigate the fate of Seurat. When the death of Michel Seurat was made public on March 10, it was generally believed, wrongly, to have been in retaliation for the expulsion of the two Iraqi opponents; Seurat's wife publicly blamed Pierre Joxe, the interior minister, of his murder ¹⁸. The degree of domestic French outrage over the hostage issue further

¹⁷ Favier, P. Martin-Roland, 1991, vol 2, p.542. This incident not only provoked a storm of protest at the time, and very serious problems for the incoming government, but also a host of analyses and conjecture. The most prevalent and pertinent of these suggests that right-wing elements within the security services deliberately sent the two Iraqis to Baghdad. There is insufficient evidence to categorically evaluate the conspiracy vs monumental police cock-up hypotheses. However, on the cock-up side, it is worth noting that a similar scenario occurred in early 1988 when Charles Pasqua expelled a very mixed bag of Iranians to ... Gabon. The group did include some members of Rajavi's Mujahidin el-Khalq. Their subsequent return to France further complicated Franco-Iranian ties, see *Le Monde* 15.1.88. Even more confusingly, one au-pair of Iranian origin had asylum status in the UK. This created a minor diplomatic incident between Paris and London and meant that UK-based refugees were subsequently officially warned against travelling to France by the British government, on the basis that London was powerless to stop France arbitrarily deporting them either to their country of origin, or indeed Gabon.

¹⁸ According to his colleagues, Seurat, a 38 year old researcher who had spent much of the previous ten years in Beirut and Damascus had died due to maltreatment and lack of medication several months earlier; "mais la guerre du mesonge demandait que la mort de Seurat fût mise en scène. Annoncée aux médias en temps utile pour influencer les élections législatives d'alors, elle se travestissait en "exécution d'un espion" afin de s'arroger une justification morale" Gilles Kepel and Olivier Mongin, avant -propos, Seurat, M. L'Etat du barbarie, Esprit/Seuil, Paris, 1989. Seurat, like so many of the French actors in the diverse "pro-Arab" milieux, was himself born in the Maghreb. His career and commitment, notably to the Palestinian cause, could be contrasted with the likes of Bitterlin and others in ASFA.

increased two days prior to the first round of voting when French television broadcast harrowing messages from the hostages. The week before, Mitterrand had despatched a series of emissaries to all the states thought possibly to hold keys to the release of the hostages. Eric Rouleau, then ambassador to Tunisia, flew secretly to Tehran after holding a series of talks with PLO officials ¹⁹. As the release of the hostages was repeatedly postponed by Tehran and Damascus, to Rouleau it became clear that French interests linked to Jacques Chirac in Beirut had effectively blocked the release by offering both the kidnappers and Iran a higher "reward" if they delayed the release until after the elections. This was subsequently confirmed by Iranian sources ²⁰. According to Favier and Martin-Roland, François Mitterrand later stated that he was "convinced that there were interventions [to block the release of the hostages] it is certain there were envoys of the RPR in Damascus, Baghdad, Tehran and Beirut [although] what they said is less sure".

Jean-Bernard Raimond pursues "normalisation" with Iran

However, if the right did pay to have the release of the hostages delayed, their delivery *after* the election was not assured. Dumas' outgoing team of quit office convinced that the principal key to the hostages' release lay in Tehran. This analysis was shared by the new minister of foreign affairs, Jean-Bernard Raimond who doggedly pursued the normalisation strategy over the next 15 months ²¹. That it was necessary to urgently address the issue of the links between France's Middle Eastern policy and terrorism in France was starkly emphasised an hour after Jacques Chirac was formally confirmed as Prime Minister on March 20 1986. Two people were killed and 28 injured in a bomb attack in the Champs-Élysée. Raimond's suggestion that he personally go immediately to Damascus and Tehran was vetoed by Chirac, fearing – no doubt correctly – that such a move would be interpreted by Baghdad and other Arab states as heralding a significant

¹⁹ Rouleau went to Tehran while diplomats Jacques Morizet and Jean-Claude Cousseran went to Baghdad in an attempt to get the two Iraqis returned to France. Meanwhile Dr Reza Raad was in Beirut.

²⁰ Favier, P. Martin-Roland, 1991, vol 2, p.547 and 830. The role of Chirac and his entourage in this episode became the subject of a major polemic in January 1987 when Le Matin published a leaked copy of Rouleau's memo to Roland Dumas on the issue.

²¹ The following text draws from the minister's own, terse account; Raimond, 1989.

shift in policy. However, initially at least, the incoming administration were able to prevent the recurrence of the February-March attacks in Paris ²². On May 20 1986 in Paris, Raimond and Chirac both received Ali Reza Moayeri. On May 7, after Moayeri's visit but before the arrival in Paris of Tariq Aziz the following week, France fulfilled a key Iranian demand and expelled Massoud Rajavi from France. The release of two of the *Antenne 2* hostages in Damascus followed on June 20. Raimond continued his campaign to repair relations with Iran. In August Raimond reached an agreement with the Iranian chargé d'affaires in Paris that hostages could be released in exchange for the repayment of the Eurodif loan, admitting to Jacques Chirac that this constituted "a sort of blackmail" ²³. Yet when a meeting was scheduled between Raimond and his Iranian counterpart in Geneva on August 14 1986, Chirac refused any financial concessions to the Iranians without first securing the release of the hostages. Raimond had no option to accept this, but nevertheless held secret negotiations with Velyati at the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York in September. Despite detailed preparations and documentation, and continued resistance from Jacques Chirac in Paris, after two meetings in New York this time the Iranians backed out, deferring a decision for a further meeting in Paris. France's position vis-à-vis Syria also caused considerable problems at this time, Britain pushing for comprehensive sanctions against Syria within the EU due to the links established between Nizar Hindawi, Syrian intelligence agents and a failed attack on an El Al plane in the UK in October 1984. With negotiations with Iran, and thus necessarily Syria, at a delicate stage, France did not want to jeopardise relations with Damascus. Britain eventually broke diplomatic ties with Syria on October 24.

During September 1986 in Paris, the terrorist attacks which had scarred the electoral campaign in February and then Chirac's inauguration as premier on March 20 resumed. On September 1 the CPPSA resurfaced with a warning to AFP of further attacks unless Nakkash and Abdullah were released. On the 8th a bomb in Paris' Hotel de Ville killed one and injured 11; the following day a large bomb was defused on a Parisian RER

²² How this was achieved remains unclear. Yet the mechanism, probably involving the increased supply of weapons to Iran, is important given that attacks resumed in September.

train. On the 11th over 40 people were injured as a bomb wrecked a café at La Defense; the following day two people were killed in an explosion in the Pub Renault on the Champs-Élysées. Paris appeared to be at war. In the face of such carnage, the threat of Chirac's bluff, tough interior minister Charles Pasqua to "terrorise the terrorists" appeared to ring increasingly hollow. Rather the bombers appeared to have calculated how best to humiliate the government; on September 16 a bomb devastated the Préfecture de Police itself, killing one and injuring over 50 people. As the justice minister and intelligence chiefs went to Algiers to try and stop the carnage, in public the authorities continued to accuse the clan of George Ibrahim Abdallah of being behind the attacks. Wanted posters were issued and rewards offered. However, by this time it is clear that there were serious divisions within the administration over the identity of the perpetrators of the attacks. The violence peaked on Wednesday the 17th, a bomb thrown from a car exploding in front of the Tati department store on the Rue de Rennes, killing six people and maiming a further 50. The following day Mitterrand, then on a tour of SE Asia, returned to Paris, immediately conferring with Pasqua, Pandraud and Chirac. The following week a series of envoys were sent by Chirac and Pasqua to Damascus. The attacks ceased.

While a further French hostage was freed in December, foreign minister Raimond continued to favour restoration of ties with Iran. Yet between late 1987 and early 1988 policy was increasingly driven by Charles Pasqua ²⁴. On March 21 1987 a series of police raids led to arrests in connection with the 1986 bombings. Evidence uncovered during these raids appeared to link a figure in the Iranian embassy, Wahid Gordji, to the attacks. In essence this led to a stand-off initially within Chirac's government, and then between France and Iran over the role of Gordji. Gordji was officially called as witness in the case on June 29, prompting a crisis within the government. By this time, a

²³ Raimond, 1989, p.101.

²⁴ George Ibrahim Abdullah was sentenced initially to four years on a charge of firearms offences in July 1986. He then appeared before a Paris court in February 1987 on a series of charges of terrorism against US and Israeli targets in Paris in during 1981-82. At this second trial he received a life sentence. Abdullah was defended by Jacques Verges. Against the background of pressure on France over hostages in Lebanon, and ongoing Franco-Iranian *rapprochement* the trial was perceived by the US as a litmus test of the extent of French "flexibility" over terrorism. See Libération, 2.3.87.

derailment of "normalisation" and serious crisis appeared unavoidable. For the first time president Mitterrand, who had been kept away from day to day decision making (and ministerial divisions) intervened. Interestingly, as in August 1981 Mitterrand's primary concern appears to have been in large part motivated by the fear of the seizure of French hostages in Iran, i.e. a replay of the 1980 US hostage drama. Within Chirac's government, foreign minister Raimond and justice minister Pandraud appear to have doubted the Iranian role in the attacks, while Charles Pasqua appeared determined to prove it ²⁵. Over the following week Tehran and Paris fought what the press dubbed the "battle of the embassies"; each surrounding each others' diplomatic premises. On July 7, Raimond on a trip to Amman, Jordan announced that the government's policy of attempting to "normalise" relations with Tehran was at an end. The sense of rupture was reinforced when on July 15 Iranian forces attacked a French vessel, the *Ville d'Anvers*, in the Gulf. This, coming after the problems with Gordji, led Raimond and Chirac to agree to the suspension of all diplomatic ties with Iran on July 17 ²⁶. Gordji was finally "released" on November 29 1987. Gordji left the embassy, having agreed to a token appearance before the magistrate investigating the 1986 Paris bombings, for Tehran ²⁷. His departure came two days after the return to France of two of the *Antenne 2* hostages, Normindin and Auque ²⁸. Thus, although relations remained exceedingly fraught for the

²⁵ Raimond, 1989, p.145. Raimond's measured, defensive account is important given that it was widely believed that there was a fundamental battle over the issue between the foreign and interior ministries. Raimond predictably but somewhat obliquely denies this, but goes on to say that in the face of the total collapse of his "Iranian" policy, he seriously considered resigning.

²⁶ Péan, P. La Menace, Fayard, 1987. See ch.10 "Gordji". As noted in the opening paragraph of this section, in fact the *dénouement* of this stage of the French saga with Iran cannot be fully appreciated abstracted from the wider international context. In the days following France's break with Tehran, the UN security council was debating a motion to lead to a cease-fire in the Gulf war. Equally, there were attacks on Iranian opponents abroad, notably in London on July 18. A month earlier ties between London and Tehran had been downgraded; the arrest of an Iranian diplomat for shoplifting in Manchester having swiftly degenerated into mutual expulsions of diplomats

²⁷ The hypercritical spirit of Gordji's judicial "interrogation" was best captured by the cartoonist Plantu in Le Monde of 29.11.88; In a scene entitled "Gordji's appearance before the judge" the judge asks a smiling Gordji "destination Beirut or Tehran? With or without bags? Corridor or aile? Smoking or non-smoking?"

²⁸ Auque published an account of his time in captivity; Auque, R. (with Forestier, P.) Un otage à Beyrouth Filipacchi, Paris, c1988. See also Coudari, M., 257 jours de détention au Liban. Jacques Grancher, Paris, 1987. Also Loiseau, Y. Le grand troc : le labyrinthe des otages français au Liban. Hachette, Paris 1988. Kauffman has since produced two books on the nature of solitude; on the Antartican archipelago of Kerguelan, and Napoleon's last days in Saint Helana

remainder of 1987, communication, negotiation and bartering between French and Iranian authorities over the hostages continued.

This communication continued during the first half of 1988, which in France was dominated by the run-up to the presidential elections, with the first round of voting on April 24. The second round, a run-off between Mitterrand and Chirac, was on May 8. With pictures of the remaining hostages still broadcast nightly over the credits introducing the evening news, the issue of the French hostages remaining in Lebanon remained a key electoral issue ²⁹. Tension between Mitterrand and Chirac over the handling of relations with Iran also surfaced during the head to head televised debate between the two candidates on April 28. What had hitherto been a relatively calm exchange of positions degenerated sharply when the two clashed over Chirac's mishandling of the Gordji affair ³⁰. The hostages issue rebounded spectacularly the following week. On May 5, three days before the final vote, Chirac melodramatically interrupted a party rally in Strasbourg to announce the news that the remaining French hostages had been released. Kauffmann, Carton and Fontaine arrived at Orly the following day.

Their release was finally secured via a series of deals in West Africa, Tehran and Beirut. The complexity of these negotiations reflected the extent of Pasqua's networks. These alone could be the subject of a thesis. The reverberations and repercussions of the clandestine deals which eventually got the final three French hostages released continued over several years, having grave implications for French governments' subsequent relations with Iran, Syria and Shia leaders in West Africa and the Levant. A bitter polemic erupted between Pasqua and Roland Dumas in July 1989 over who had promised what to whom over the release of Nakkash ³¹. There is also considerable

²⁹ It is important to stress to non-French readers the degree to which the nightly roll-call of hostages, followed by the intonation "... *n'ont toujours pas été libérés*" was an indelible, emotive feature of the French political and media landscape during these years. Evidently this stands in stark contrast to the official stance in the UK. Jill Morrell, the catalyst for the Friends of John McCartney, was in part spurred and inspired by the very different tactics followed in France.

³⁰ Favier, P. Martin-Roland, 1991, vol 2, p.913.

³¹ Le Monde 4.7.89.

evidence to suggest that the failure to honour payoffs and promises made to Shia leaders in Senegal as part of the May 1988 hostage releases led to the explosion of a UTA DC-10 flight in West Africa on 19 September 1989, with the loss of 171 lives ³². Nevertheless, it was the success of Charles Pasqua's aides, notably Jean-Charles Marchiani and Iskander Safa, which proved that Pasqua's parallel foreign policy had finally wrested control of the hostages dossier from the foreign ministry ³³. The role of Charles Pasqua during the first period of cohabitation highlights both the artificiality of the domestic:foreign dichotomy in this context, and the primacy of personal networks in the making of French foreign policy. Although Pasqua appears to have had little direct bearing on Franco-Iraqi relations, his career epitomizes these two facets of Fifth Republic policy. In addition, in a further twist which well illustrates the convoluted nature of the role of politics and personalities during the 1986-88 period of cohabitation, President Mitterrand and Pasqua appear to have established a good working relationship. Mitterrand clearly admired the toughness of Pasqua and during 86-87 took pleasure in hinting to journalists that their improbable *entente* was due to links forged forty years earlier in the resistance ³⁴.

4 Franco-Iraqi relations during *cohabitation*; oil, debt and arms.

³² Dossier by Pierre Péan, *Libération*, 28.2.90

³³ The most detailed analytical account of the French negotiations to release hostages in Lebanon is provided in Ranstorp, M. *Hizb'allah in Lebanon; the politics of the western hostage crisis*, Macmillan, 1997. This has the twin-merit of providing a comparative analysis of the diverse US and European initiative to secure the release of hostages, and provide a perspective from the point of view of Lebanese and Iranian groups.

³⁴ More importantly, Pasqua's son, Pierre, whose views and friendships are even further to the right than his father's, and the president's son, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand (who by now had taken over from Guy Penne as his father's Africa advisor) were friends. On this see Carton, D. *La deuxième vie de Charles Pasqua*, Flammarion, Paris, 1995, especially ch.10 "Le masque africain", p.189. Pasqua's role in the Gaullist movement, his links with Jacques Foccart, De Gaulle's *Rassemblement [de] Peuple Français* [CHK] and the murky *Service d'Action Civique* (SAC) the formation of the RPR, and his ambivalent relationship with Chirac can be traced via secondary literature. In addition to Daniel Carton's 1995 book, see: Boggio, Ph. Rollat, A., *Ce terrible Monsieur Pasqua*, Olivier Orban, Paris, 1988, probably the most detailed account of Pasqua's background. Also, Pelliser, P., *Charles Pasqua*, J.C.Lattés, Paris, 1987. The overlapping networks of both Foccart and Pasqua in Africa, are in turn inextricably linked to those of the oil giant Elf. On Foccart, see Péan, P. *L'homme d'ombre..* Fayard, Paris, 1990. Foccart, who died in 1994 (?) refused to cooperate with Péan, both the ambition and constraints of the book summed up in its frustrated subtitle; "elements of an enquiry into the most mysterious and powerful man in the Fifth Republic" See also the two volume "authorised version", Gaillard, Ph., Foccart, J. (entretiens avec), *Foccart Parle*, Fayard & Jeune Afrique, Paris, 1995/97.

As explained in section two above, the principal elements of Franco-Iraqi relations during the mid-eighties were established following Tariq Aziz's trip to Paris in January 1983. These consisted of continued French arms supplies in exchange for a mutually agreed, renegotiated schedule of limited debt repayments by Iraq. These repayments were made via a complex triangular arrangement whereby Iraqi oil was supplied to the French oil companies, Elf and Total. Receipts from oil sales by these companies went to the French treasury, who paid Iraq's creditors. In practice the official export credit guarantee agency, COFACE, had already been obliged to reimburse many French creditors for unpaid Iraqi debts, thus receipts went to COFACE. This arrangement clearly left vast scope for disagreement, both between Iraq and the French government (notably due to the shifts in the price of oil), and between rival French agencies, both in government and the private sector. The dossiers were further complicated by the fact that Iraq, still at war, was constantly placing additional arms orders with French companies. With Baghdad so far in arrears, these transactions became both increasingly fraught and complex. Companies were eager to sell to Baghdad, but required COFACE and thus government agreement to proceed with any new orders. What evolved was an exceedingly complex game with all actors effectively engaging in fraught strategies of leverage. Iraq argued that without additional arms supplies they might lose the war and thus be unable to repay any debts.

Tariq Aziz in Paris, June 1986

The Iraqi leadership was undoubtedly concerned over France's desire to "normalise" relations with Iran and the fact that, faced with French hostages in Lebanon and continued attacks in France, Jacques Chirac's government had endorsed this policy. The 48 hour visit to Paris of Tariq Aziz on June 9 1986 provided the occasion for a public clarification of French policy towards the Gulf. Chirac's cabinet had met to discuss relations with Iraq on April 16, a month after coming to office ³⁵. The meeting concluded by agreeing that, despite its intention to re-establish ties with Tehran, the

³⁵ On Tariq Aziz's June 1986 trip to Paris, see *Libération*, 9 & 11.6.86, and *Le Monde*, 11 & 12.6.86 [t2, pp 16-19]. Subsequent quotes are drawn from these articles.

government should “demonstrate to Iraq that France remains by her side” and that France should indicate, via political gestures, “her fidelity to the friendship with Baghdad and her confidence in [Iraq’s] future” ³⁶. While seemingly straightforward, this was in practice an exceedingly complex and contradictory policy position. In reality, for the reasons outlined above, there was never any real questioning that arms sales to Iraq would not continue. However, Chirac’s government had to demonstrate to Iraq, and *be seen to be demonstrating*, to other Gulf Arab states, and indeed the US, that despite ongoing negotiations with Iran, solidarity with and arms sales to Iraq would continue.

Tariq Aziz’s reception in Paris in June effectively achieved this. Iraq’s vice-premier met with Chirac, as well as his ministers of finance, defence and foreign affairs. He was also received by President Mitterrand. During each meeting, and in numerous interviews during the trip, both French and Iraqi officials were at pains to point out that there was not the slightest question of any shift in France’s policy of support for Iraq. As Aziz arrived, Prime Minister Jacques Chirac made a special appearance on France’s principal television channel TF1, in which he spelled out France’s policy towards the Middle East and the terrorist attacks at home. Chirac declared that “it would be in the general interest and vocation of France to normalise our relations with Iran ... [but] I naturally exclude the idea, that in order to achieve this normalisation, France would change its policy towards the Middle Eastern or Iraq”. Tariq Aziz declared that “We are totally reassured having heard Jacques Chirac on TF1... [he has] excluded any change [in policy] towards Iraq during the process of normalising relations with Iran”. Standing alongside Chirac on the Matignon lawn before the press corps on June 10, Aziz affirmed that “the friendship between Baghdad and Paris is strong and will remain so”. For his part, Chirac stressed the continuity in relations; “This policy of friendship and solidarity does not date simply from yesterday, [and as such] it has never been undermined, irrespective of the changes in French governments, which clearly shows that [the relationship] is grounded in reality ³⁷ ”.

³⁶ Angeli, 1992, p.173 and annex, p.245.

³⁷ “*est une réalité*”. Trying to translate some of Chirac’s truncated utterances one is reminded of

Such support was not confined to the right wing government; after a 30 minute meeting between Tariq Aziz and Mitterrand meeting on June 10, the Elysée stated that the President had reaffirmed “the solidarity and the loyalty of France towards Iraq”. Despite the acute uncertainty surrounding the conduct of foreign policy in the untested waters of *cohabitation*, in practice President Mitterrand and his entourage endorsed both Chirac’s policy towards Iraq, and the “normalisation” of ties with Iran. They were, after all, the policies followed by the Presidency and successive Socialist governments since 1981 ³⁸.

As stated above, on May 7, a month before the arrival of Tariq Aziz, France had met one of Iran’s demands and expelled Massoud Rajavi and his wife. This prompted much discussion during Aziz’s time in Paris, in part because the Rajavi couple had gone to Baghdad, in part because of the speculation that their departure would trigger the release of one or more French hostages from Lebanon.

In public, both Tariq Aziz and his French interlocutors stressed that his trip to Paris was primarily “political”, concerned with clarifying and publicising French policy in the Gulf in the light of the new conjuncture of an incoming French government faced with a terror campaign at home which was clearly linked to its policy stance in the Middle East. However, in reality much of the time and technical aspects of the trip was taken up with the ongoing, largely intractable, issue of how Baghdad could pay for both the weapons already delivered, and the new orders which it claimed it urgently needed if it was to be successful in repelling the Iranians. Just prior to the Iraqi deputy leader’s arrival in Paris, details of Iraq’s outstanding debts to France were leaked to and published by *Le Canard Enchaîné* ³⁹. These stressed that under the 1983 “oil-for-debt” agreement, Iraq had honoured its commitments to France during 1985. However, payments in early 1986 had ceased and the subsequent decline in oil prices made it impossible for Iraq to continue payments. Indeed disagreement over the price at which

one of the arguments Mitterrand put forward for standing against Chirac in 1988 was that “*cet homme n’a pas de parole*”.

³⁸ Védrine, H. *Les Mondes de Mitterrand*, Fayard, Paris, 1996, p.319.

³⁹ *Le Canard Enchaîné*, 28.5.86.

oil should be paid meant that the accord, due to lapse in July 1986, had stalled. At this point total Iraqi arrears to France were put at FFr23bn, with FFr10bn for military debts.

During the June 1986 trip, Aziz made it clear that Iraq urgently required additional arms supplies from France. Detailed contracts for additional (Puma and Super Dauphin) helicopters from Aérospatiale had been under discussion from March, as were a large contract for mortars from Thomson-Brandt, known by the name "Jupiter". Beneath the apparent calm, mutual public statements suggesting "business as usual", in fact there deep-seated divisions within Chirac's cabinet over how to handle Iraq. In mid-July an inter-ministerial meeting was held on Iraq. Chaired by one of Chirac's advisors, it was made clear to minister of finance Balladur, and his minister of external trade Michel Noir, that Chirac was determined that trade with Iraq, including the supply of weapons so urgently sought by Baghdad, should continue. The fact that, in the judgement of the ministry of finance, Iraq was technically insolvent and would be unable to pay for the French goods, was waived aside. This position was confirmed on 11 December when a note from Chirac marked "*Confidentiel Défense*" was distributed to the ministers concerned, but pointedly kept from Mitterrand. This confirmed that arms would be supplied to Iraq on relaxed credit terms, regardless of Iraq's arrears during 1986⁴⁰. Not only could the Thomson-Brandt's mortar and Aérospatiale helicopter contracts be supplied, but this encouraged those in Dassault to redouble their efforts to negotiate sales for the Mirage2000 to Iraq.

Relations between Iraq and France under Chirac's *cohabitationiste* administration thus continued to be excellent up until the presidential elections of summer 1988. Having decided to press ahead with additional arms sales in 1986, in early July 1987 a new accord on debt repayment was hammered out. By this time it was clear that, despite the ongoing arms sales, notably in spare parts, the total volume of Franco-Iraq trade was declining, although considerable optimism was expressed as to future trade links if, as and when the war ended⁴¹. This was the case for most of Iraq's commercial partners, as

⁴⁰ Angeli, 1992, p.176 and annexes, p.245-254

⁴¹ Le Monde, 29.7.87. Around 30 French companies had been present in the November 1986

Iraq's financial situation deteriorated due to war and declining oil prices.

In August 1987 the *Canard Enchaîné* opened a polemic as it revealed that Michel Noir had visited Baghdad in June as Chirac's personal envoy. The *Canard* suggested, 'though failed to prove conclusively, that Noir had been authorised to discuss the rebuilding of Tammuz with Saddam Hussein. Earlier in June, a French diplomat in Kuwait had also stated in a newspaper interview that France was willing to help reconstruct Tammuz – although the Quai d'Orsay subsequently denied this. Chirac and his entourage strongly denied any association between Noir's visit and nuclear cooperation. However, news of Noir's visit had been kept from Mitterrand and almost everyone in the foreign ministry. Eric Desmarest, a confidant of Chirac's who headed foreign minister Jean-Bernard Raimond's cabinet in the Quai d'Orsay, had directly relayed the message for translation to the French ambassador in Baghdad, Maurice Courage.

The premier subsequently insisted that the obliquely worded "personal message" which Noir had conveyed had been concerned uniquely with the rescheduling of debts. The publicity and polemic surrounding Noir's trip and message created a spat between Mitterrand and Chirac, to whom Mitterrand apparently addressed a sharply worded criticism. Chirac duly apologised and issued a series of "clarifications", stressing in particular to Israel that France was not intending to reconstruct Tammuz. These leaks highlighted numerous subsidiary paradoxes in French dealings with Iraq. The most notable was that while France granted far more lenient credit terms to Iraq than other OECD countries, debts to Paris were also being repaid far later, and less regularly than her competitors. It also reopened the polemic, which had resurfaced the previous year, over Chirac's responsibility in granting Iraq nuclear facilities in the 1970s.

Despite controversy surrounding the nature of Chirac and Michel Noirs' contacts with Baghdad, in both Paris and Baghdad, the long-term nature of Franco-Iraqi ties continued to be stressed. Speaking to French admirers in Baghdad in mid-1987, Saddam Hussein's

Baghdad trade fair, which was attended by Chirac's minister of external trade, Michel Noir.

vocabulary about the “special relationship” between France stuck firmly to the script first established between Chirac and himself fifteen years earlier ⁴² Similarly, Chirac’s letter to Saddam, conveyed by Noir, was affective in tone, speaking of “our joint-personal initiative of long-date”. In September 1987 Edouard Balladur was addressing a strongly worded note of criticism to Chirac about the government’s contradictory stance towards new arms orders and Iraq’s unpaid debts. In this Balladur explicitly criticised André Giraud in the ministry of defense for allowing the arms companies to engage themselves well beyond the limits fixed by the ministry of finance and COFACE. Balladur explicitly warned that any new Dassault contracts should not exceed FFr3bn. The outcome of the disagreement between Chirac and his minister of finance was that, during the meeting in Paris of the Franco-Iraqi joint-commission in March 1988, the July 1987 oil for debt agreement was extended, and France agreed to provide FFr300m of new trade credits. Yet despite Balladur’s reservations, by December 1987 it was clear that the government was prepared to allow Dassault to enter into serious discussions with Iraq over the supply of a dozen Mirage F1 to replace some of those lost during the war, while exploring the longer term option possibility of selling the M2000, the F1s successor, to Iraq. By this time Iraq was operating 109 Mirage F1s, supplied under the 1977 and 1980 contracts

6 France’s “Iraqi” lobbies in the mid-eighties

At the same moment that Balladur was vainly trying to curb the enthusiasm of Dassault’s salesmen for Baghdad, in Iraq itself the “Festival of Babylon” celebration of September 1987 provided the occasion for many of the diverse interests and groups involved in Franco-Iraqi relationship to cross paths. An official delegation was headed by Camille Cabana and François Bujon ⁴³. Bujon, one of France’s senior diplomats, was at this point defense advisor to premier Chirac. These two envoys overlapped with a series of groups from the milieu of pro-Arab and pro-Iraqi lobbies which were introduced in chapter five

⁴² See the interview with Saddam Hussein by Charles Saint-Prot, *Le Matin*, 31.7.87.

⁴³ Cabana would later head the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris. IMA opened in November 1987, Edgard Pisani being its first head. Nicolas Beau’s *Paris Capitale Arabe*, Seuil, Paris, 1995 contains a partial insight into the politics of IMA.

⁴⁴. By the autumn of 1987 French economic dossiers and stakes in Iraq were so large that the kind of lobbying initially undertaken by ASFA and the “pro-Arab” milieu of the seventies had become largely redundant to diplomacy. This didn’t stop such groups and their publications from operating. In 1985 several individuals who already had long but diverse experience of relations with Iraq formed a new solidarity group, the *Association des amitiés franco-irakienne* (AAFI). This was brought together by Gilles Munier, who already had an established track record of lobbying on behalf of Franco-Iraqi trade, notably from his home base of Brittany which as a consequence had developed a considerable agricultural trade with Baghdad. Also members of AAFI were the Gaullist thinker and writer Philippe Saint-Robert, the orientalist Jacques Berque, Michel Lelong (a Catholic priest charged with christian:islamic relations in France), the politician Alain Mayoud (UDF) and the veteran Gaullist Georges Gorse, as well as Jean Dresch, Pierre Rossi, Hélène Touraine and the Le Monde journalist Paul Balta, who had already written extensively on Iraq. Jean-Pierre Chevenement, a long-time friend of Berque, and at that point minister of education, became honorary president. Paul Depis, who was replaced as ambassador to Baghdad by Maurice Courage in 1984, joined the group later, becoming its president ⁴⁵. AAFI sporadically produced publications, organised parliamentary lobbying, via Iraqi friendship and solidarity groups in both the assembly and Senat, and public meetings, operating initially out of the premises of ASFA. A 34 page magazine “Paris-Baghdad” was published in May 1987 following the group’s inaugural general assembly and a national tour was arranged for the Iraqi ambassador Mohamed al-Mashat ⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ The indefatigable Philippe Saint-Robert (see ch.4, section 5) provides an insightful vignette of the French in Baghdad at this moment. See his *Le Secret des jours*, J.C.Lattés, Paris, 1995, p.392.

⁴⁵ Interviews with Balta, Munier, Depis, in Paris & Lyon 1986. See Beau, 1995 and Angeli 1992, p.186. Much was made of AAFI in the autumn of 1990, when Munier and Berque in particular mounted a defense of Saddam Hussein. In the 1980s Munier regularly went to Baghdad to promote trade with Brittany and Rennes. Media attention briefly focussed on him when he returned from Baghdad in September 1990 with nine French nationals, see *Le Monde*, 3.10.90. Both Munier and Meynoud and many of those active on behalf of Iraq in the 1980s subsequently spearheaded the post-1991 anti-sanctions campaign in France. By late 1995 Munier was the secretary general of Association franco-irakienne de coopération économique (AFICE). The president was none other than Roland Bareilles, the CFP/Total representative in Baghdad in the 1960s-70s (See ch.4), while five ex-French ambassadors were on the board of AFICE. See also the edited collection of essays by Meynoud, A. Irak, La Faute, Cerf, Paris, 1999.

⁴⁶ The magazine includes pieces by Berque, Saint-Robert, Balta, Pierre Rossi, Philippe Rondot etc. as well as interviews with al-Mashat and Iraq’s minister of culture and information, Latif Nsayef Jassem.

Just as several of the members of AAFI were also members of ASFA, so some joined yet another new "pro-Arab" grouping with Iraqi leanings which was formed in 1987. The *Cercle France-Pays Arabes* was formed by a RPR député from the Dordogne, Yves Guéna in more or less direct rivalry with ASFA. This was apparently at the instigation of Gilles Munier and the Iraqi ambassador of the time, El-Machat. The need for a new body was apparently due to the fact that Lucien Bitterlin, the head of ASFA had written an overly-complementary biography of Hafez Al-Assad .

7 "Post-war ... pre-war" relations, 1988-90; Jean-Pierre Chevenement and Dassault.

Despite securing the liberation of the remaining French hostages three days prior to the second round of the 1988 presidential election, Jacques Chirac was nevertheless beaten by Mitterrand. In the ensuing legislative elections, Mitterrand's Socialist Party was returned to power, bring 26 months of *cohabitation* to an end. As with the earlier changes in government, a shift in political orientation and personnel made little difference to the direction of French policy in the Middle East. Paradoxically, given the effort that Jean-Bernard Raimond had put into re-establishing relations with Iran prior to the Gordji affair, diplomatic ties between Paris and Tehran were finally restored only in mid-1988. In releasing the hostages into the hands of Chirac, Tehran appeared to have sided with the right. Yet now it was Roland Dumas, reappointed as foreign minister under Michel Rocard's first government, who was able to complete the strategy that he himself had set in motion four years earlier. This long awaited "normalisation" of Franco-Iranian ties came as progress was made within the UN to broker agreement as to the implementation of resolution 598 voted in 1987 to bring the Iran:Iraq war to a close. France claimed that its own close diplomatic ties with Iraq assisted in getting agreement at the UN.

The change of government brought with it a shift in the relative power of the ministers and ministries who had been divided over what attitude to take towards Iraq's debts during *cohabitation*. With Chirac out of office and a new French administration in place, those within the finance ministry who had been demanding a halt to new trade with Iraq until the

debts were settled gained the upper hand. New premier Michel Rocard had no particular relationship with Iraq and the former prime minister's resolute defense of ties with Baghdad were lost. There was therefore a shift towards a far more cautious approach to Iraq, stressing the necessity of Iraq's strict adherence to debt repayments. By the time of the November 1988 Baghdad trade fair, COFACE export credit guarantees remained suspended for Iraq, and the new minister of external trade, Jean-Marie Rausch, was far more prudent than his predecessors as to the possibility of signing new contracts in Baghdad. French companies complained bitterly of being in a paradoxical and untenable position. Because French companies had invested so heavily in Iraq during the seventies and eighties, there was substantial debt, and thus a block on new credits. Yet German and UK companies, who were not as well established in Iraq were able to gain official credit guarantees from their governments and thus were far better placed to win post-war reconstruction contracts ⁴⁷.

In the two years between mid-1988, (the change of government in France and the end of the Iran:Iraq war) and Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the formal French position remained one of financial prudence dominated by a desire to retrieve debts that Iraq had accumulated during the war. Yet despite the reticence of the ministry of finance, headed by Pierre Bérégovoy, now fully backed by the prime minister and the bulk of the government, one sector of the government and state nevertheless remained strongly attached to a special relationship with Iraq. This was the military, under its new minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement. To the surprise of some, Chevenement immediately got on excellently with the military top brass, who saw in him a more pliable minister than André Giraud had proved. Chevenement equally had close and long standing relations with well-placed individuals in France's aeronautical industry ⁴⁸. Chevenement's longstanding engagement with Iraq has already been noted. Dassault, who with possible contracts for both Mirage F1 and Mirage 2000 in the offing from Baghdad, in particular ensured that they were able to lobby via Chevenement. In 1985 Dassault, whose PDG Serge Dassault was close to Chirac, had already cultivated ties with Mitterrand's entourage via the

⁴⁷ Libération, 17.11.88, La tribune de l'expansion, 16.11.88.

⁴⁸ Schwartzbrod, A. Le président qui n'aimait pas la guerre; dans les coulisses du pouvoir militaire

appointment of François de Grossouvre as an advisor ⁴⁹. De Grossouvre, General Benouville, Dassault himself as well as the ever present Hughes de L'Estoile all appear to have attempted to reduce the ministry of finance's reticence to fund new aircraft purchases by Iraq. Mitterrand's brother, Jacques Mitterrand also visited Baghdad in late 1989. Jacques Mitterrand, although 72 years old, headed the *Office générale de l'air* and GIFAS, the official commission which acted as a lobbying group for France's main aeronautical exporters.

Thus, despite the fact that there appeared to be little flexibility in the French position, there was nevertheless a significant French presence at the Baghdad air show in April 1989. Chevenement sent his chief of staff, Maurice Schmitt. Dassault was present in the shape of Serge Dassault, head of foreign sales Hughes de L'Estoile, accompanied by two demonstration versions of the Mirage2000 and three Alphajet trainers. Following this display, Dassault appears to have embarked discussions on the possibility of constructing production and maintenance facilities in Iraq for the Alphajet. In April-May 1989 Iraq received just eight Mirage F1's and associated missiles and spare parts which had been negotiated for during 1987. The delivery of these began in the autumn of 1989 and was continuing in July 1990. Meanwhile what was widely viewed as a major breakthrough in relations was achieved in September 1989. On September 15 a comprehensive agreement was reached over the rescheduling of Iraq's post-1988 debts to France. Since the end of the war with Iran, Baghdad had essentially ceased payment to many creditors, including France. The agreement provided for the immediate repayment of FFr1.5bn, with a rescheduling of a further FFr7bn. In announcing the agreement, *Le Monde* warned, in what in retrospect can be seen as somewhat prophetic tones, of the dangers of assisting Iraq's plans for militarisation and Dassault's hopes of selling the Mirage 2000 ⁵⁰. Yet the debt agreement did not substantially improve relations, or lessen Chevenement's relative isolation within the government. When Iraq's vice-prime minister Saadoun Hammadi visited Paris on January 23 1990, Mitterrand delegated an advisor to see him and

1981-1995, Plon, Paris, 1995. See ch.4.

⁴⁹ See Schwatzbord, *Dassault, le dernier round*, O.Oban, 1991. De Grossouvre was a close confidant of Mitterrand's. He committed suicide in the L'Elysée in 1993, see fn 9 in the conclusion.

⁵⁰ *Le Monde*, 17-18.9.89.

Hammadi's audiences with Rocard, Dumas and Bérégovy were reportedly largely confined to discussions on debt. Only Chevenement went out of his way to welcome the Iraqi with a formal dinner. Curiously, Chevenement himself flew to Iraq shortly afterwards, being received at length by Saddam Hussein, and his wife and family, before flying on to Egypt. On his return to France, the Minister of Defense argued strongly, but to little avail, that France should be investing more substantially and aggressively in Iraq.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to briefly trace some of the key incidents and effects of French policy towards Iraq in the mid-1980s. During this period, relations with Iraq increasingly intermeshed and overlapped with France's antagonistic ties with Iran, notably via the holding of French hostages in Lebanon, and successive bombing campaigns in metropolitan France. These were derived from, and served to partially eclipse, earlier ties with Baghdad. Six issues appear to merit further consideration:

- 1 The cause of deeper divisions within successive French governments over the relative merits of policy towards both Iraq and Iran. Chapter six briefly explored this issue for the period 1981-83. Yet this is more particularly the case during Chirac's 1986-88 cabinet as policy towards the belligerents divided premier Chirac, Balladur (finance), Michel Noir (external trade), Pandraud (justice) and Pasqua (interior). To what degree was Chirac's determination to back trade with Iraq due to his personal links with Dassault? Beyond 1988, did Dassault and other aeronautical producers' "capture" the DGA and ministry of defence help explain both the "pro-Iraqi" stance and subsequent degree of relative isolation of Chevenement in the post-June 1988 socialist government? What was the influence of key individuals such as Hughes d'Estoile, the president's brother Jacques Mitterrand and Serge Dassault himself, upon decision making?
- 2 A more precise evaluation of the arms supply dimension of Franco-Iraqi ties would have to examine to what extent French supplies were as necessary and

decisive as the Iraqi claimed in checking Iranian assaults. How did French supplies fit within the wider Iraqi arms procurement programme and the evolution of the war with Iran? Equally important are broader geo-political shifts; the manner in which the US, from late 1983, acquiesced in French supplies during the war and after 1988 how OECD states' differing attitudes to commercial trade – in both civilian and military goods – was viewed by the Iraqis.

- 3 Iraq's ability, at least until 1988, to continually extract arms supplies from France, despite unpaid bills, is striking. Despite being in the position of the supplicant, Iraq appears to have understood and manipulated the French policy process far more successfully than French policy makers were able to influence events in Baghdad, where despite the much-vaunted "special relationship", by the mid-1980s French companies faced ever stiffer commercial competition in securing contracts.

- 4 While this chapter has attempted to touch on the armaments dimensions of the relationship, it has neglected the oil sector, which earlier chapters argued was central to the relations with Iraq in the 1970s. Elf and Total were clearly instrumental in enabling the triangular "arms-debt-oil" repayment system to operate from 1983. A better understanding of the political powers underlying this could be gained from a closer investigation of the oil companies' strategies towards Iraq, as well as broader Middle Eastern oil price and production issues. This in turn ultimately needs to be linked to the longer term debates over the restructuring of the state's holdings in the oil and arms sectors, the roots of which can be traced back to the Chirac government's partial privatisations of 86-88 ⁵¹.

- 5 Linked to point three above, clearly Iraq was not the only Middle Eastern actor to successfully manipulate ties with Paris. The degree of leverage which virtually *all* the Middle Eastern "partners" exercised over France during the protracted hostage

⁵¹ Clearly this aspect is even more pressing *post*-1991. Both because France's attitude towards sanctions and post-sanctions Iraq appears to have been underpinned by oil interests, and because of the accelerated restructuring of the economy from the early 1990s. In the autumn of 1999, Total effectively took over Elf, bringing the rivalry narrated earlier to an end; ch.3 section 7.

and domestic bombing campaigns requires far more research. Indeed the evidence suggests that the skill of Middle Eastern actors in successfully understanding and then manipulating to their own ends the French policy process is of far greater interest than the internal “contradictions” of the French policy process which this text has attempted to highlight. This would be the case for most Middle Eastern actors involved in the hostage negotiations, the successive waves of bombings in France, as well as the attacks on French and other western interests in Lebanon. The latter is most dramatically so following the October 1983 attacks on American and French bases in Beirut ⁵².

- 6 The role of export credit guarantees and COFACE remains little understood. How COFACE interacted with the ministry of finance and whether Iraqi debts, one of largest outstanding portfolios, was “politicised” or evaluated from a technocratic and financial stand point requires further thought. An identical dilemma faced most OECD government who both extensively exported to Iraq during early 1980s and then hoped to benefit from post-war reconstruction; hence the focus on UK’s ECGD in the Scott enquiry and report. Evidently the broader issue of Iraqi debts, to both OECD states and other Arab Gulf countries is also of relevance in evaluating Iraq’s motivations in August 1990.

Inescapably, the evaluation of these points *within their proper context, that the closing years of the 1980s*, is rendered both impossible, and probably historically irrelevant, in the shadows cast by the Iraqi army’s invasion of Kuwait in the dawn of August 2 1990.

vc

⁵² Writing ten years later, Robert Fisk cogently argued that the Beirut bombings could be viewed in retrospect as the beginning of a new form of conflict. He suggests that the role of western public opinion, and the righteous rhetoric of “terrorism” adopted in the wake of the bombings by Reagan in particular, clumsily played into the hands of those who sought to foster a myth of confrontation. Fisk argues that it was this which, by late 1993, had led to the neutering of American power in Somalia and Haiti, Independent on Sunday (London), 23.10.93.

Epilogue

vc

*Jeudi 9 août: ... il y a quelques semaines, personne n'avait dit un mot sur l'Irak. Comme en 1989, à Paris, où personne n'avait parlé du mur de Berlin, Jamais les puissants n'ont été aussi myopes. Comme leur myopie leur profite, cela ne va pas les inciter à chercher à voir loin.*¹

*Samedi 4 août: Récapitulation: depuis le début de la guerre Iran/Irak, la France a vendu pour 16 milliards de dollars à l'Irak (contre 13 milliards pour l'URSS); l'Irak est notre second fournisseur en pétrole; l'Irak nous doit 30 milliards de francs*².

Many Parisians had already left the capital for *les grandes vacances*, when on Wednesday August 1 1990 president Mitterrand, premier Michel Rocard and ministers held a final cabinet meeting. The president and most cabinet members then followed their citizens' lead, quitting Paris that afternoon. Mitterrand was awoken abruptly at six the following morning; the tranquillity of his Latche country retreat broken by the news that Iraqi troops had invaded Kuwait.

The French response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is not the subject of this thesis. Yet neither the profound impact of the invasion itself, nor the long-term implications of France's subsequent participation in the war on French foreign and military policy can be fully understood without reference to the long relationship between French and Iraqi elites which this text has sought to examine.

Retrospectively, three aspects of August 1990 and its aftermath can be seen to have a bearing on the preceding texts:

- Firstly the war helped partially lift the veil of limited information and publicity about France's longstanding ties with Iraq and other Middle Eastern states. The introduction highlighted the near total lack of serious analytical literature on France's ties with Iraq and other Gulf Arab states prior to 1990. Extensive press

¹ Attali, J. Verbatim, Vol.III, 1988-91, Fayard, Paris, 1995, p.556.

² Attali, 1995, p.550.

coverage of the scope of Franco-Iraqi ties was then triggered by the outbreak of war. Claude Angeli and Stéphanie Mesnier's book *Notre ami Saddam*, from which this text has frequently drawn, followed in 1992³.

Information and debate about France's ties with Iraq were accentuated after August 1990 as divisions widened within France over the government's attitude to the conflict. Many individuals with long-established links to pro-Arab and pro-Iraqi campaigning groups, whose genesis and activities were chronicled earlier in these text, gained far more public attention⁴. This is *not* to argue that such groups had a determinant impact upon policy. The conclusion which follows argues that the opposite was the case. However, even 'though such groups and opinions were not influential during the war, their longer-term impact is more complex'⁵

- Secondly a continuity of similar policy mechanisms, process and personnel as had been deployed in the eighties was evident in Mitterrand's handling of the crisis. This was most obviously so in the early stages of the confrontation with Iraq; notably the initial despatch of envoys to "explain" the French position to Arab allies, and the numerous parallel attempts to use France's "privileged" links to Iraq to achieve a negotiated end to the crisis⁶. Equally the stress at several key points in the text of a left-right foreign policy consensus over key issues concerning Middle Eastern policy clearly holds for 1990/91.

³ See introduction, footnotes 8, 9 and 10. However, this change should not be exaggerated, as noted in fn 3 and 7 of the introduction, despite the war and focus on the Franco—Iraqi relationship, there remains a dearth of literature on French policy towards, Iran, Saudi Arabia or the Emirates.

⁴ "France-Irak; l'argent et la corruption" (dossier, pp.8-18), L'Evenement du Jeudi, 13.9.90. "Vingt ans d'irakophilie française", Le Monde 23.8.90 (Laurent Greilsamer). "Les acteurs du lobby pro-irakien", Quotidien du Paris, 10.9.90 (J-M Kalfleche). Commentaire sur un virage, Libération 14.8.90 (Michel Tibon-Cornillot). For Gilles Munier, attention was greatly increased due to his involvement in attempts to secure the release of French citizens detained in Iraq.

⁵ Particularly in the light of the post-sanctions debate in France and the UN, and the manner in which, by the late 1990s French opposition to US and UK policy over Iraq had merged with a resurgence of wider French misgivings over American hegemony. This is clearly the case in terms of Chevènement's impact. Notable figures publicly against the war at the time included Couve de Murville (de Gaulle's foreign minister), Michel Debré, Cheysson, André Giraud, Michel Jobert, as well as Jacques Berque. See also Jacques Berque's piece from May 1991, republished in his posthumous collection, *Une cause jamais perdue*, Albin Michel, Paris, 1998, pp.258-263.

⁶ On August 13 1980 Mitterrand decided to send 12 special envoys to various Arab, Latin American and Asian states to "explain" France's position in the conflict. These included Claude Cheysson to the PLO in Tunis, and Jean-Louis Bianco to Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

- The third relevant aspect of the 1990/91 war is the manner in which it generated far greater information about and debate over France's foreign policy making and objectives ⁷. As such it was a catalyst for the far-reaching military reforms and the broader reassessment of military role, rank and notions of *grandeur* which form the backbone of France's foreign and defence policy reforms in the 1990s. This was more pointedly so in that the 1990 Gulf crisis came in the wake of the uncertainty which marked French reactions to the end of Cold War and reunification of Germany ⁸.

vc

⁷ Josette A., Christine C., *La Guerre de Mitterrand : la dernière grande illusion*, Olivier Orban, Paris, 1991. Genestar, A. *Les Péchés du prince*, Grasset, Paris, c1992, pp.19-93. Details of the "Pisani" initiative are given in; Howorth, J. "French policy in the conflict", pp.175-200, Danchev, A. Keohane, D. *International perspectives in the Gulf conflict 1990-91*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1994.

⁸ Heisbourg, F. "France and the Gulf crisis" pp. 17-38 in *Western Europe and the Gulf*, Gnesotto, N. Roper, J. Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 1992. Howorth, J. "France: national defence policy, an illusion inside a chimera" 1994. Howorth, J. Menon, A. (eds) *The European Union and national defence policy*, Routledge, London, 1997. Cohen, S. (ed) *Mitterrand et la sortie de la guerre froide*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1998, esp.321-327. This volume resumes what was a particularly intense conference-debate between many of the foreign policy actors during Mitterrand's second *septennat*. Hubert Védrine in particular was outspoken; weeks later the 1997 legislatures bounced him back into office.

Conclusion. Iraq and the specificities of French foreign policy.

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This thesis has attempted to provide an analysis of the making of French foreign policy towards Iraq, while charting the evolution of France's broader relationship with Arab Gulf states during the Fifth Republic. The bulk of the text has focussed on an analysis of foreign policy decision making in successive Fifth Republic governments, as revealed via the evolution of relations between France and Iraq. This conclusion makes seven broad observations, drawing together the objectives and themes identified in the introduction with the historical narratives established through the diverse chapters.

1 Firstly, in the introduction the thesis set itself the task of evaluating *the extent and impact of economic interests in shaping this bilateral relationship*. How far did economic interests determine foreign policy? Was France's concern to secure oil supplies and increase exports of defence and aeronautical equipment the driving force beneath the development of relations between successive administrations in Baghdad and Paris? Broadly speaking, it was clear, most particularly in chapters 3 and 4, that France's oil requirements were a determinant factor in shaping policy towards the Middle East. It was firstly the need to secure oil supplies, particularly as "nationally controlled" supplies from Algeria became unavailable (following revision of the economic aspects of the Evian agreement in 1965, then Algeria's nationalisations of 1971), which drove France to develop relations with Arab Gulf states. Iraq was premier among these due to the *Compagnie française des pétroles* (CFP)'s origins in, and longstanding links with, Iraq (chapter 1). Secondly, the need to pay for oil, and attempt to partially offset commercial deficits with Arab oil suppliers, meant that France energetically exported arms and large civil engineering projects to the Gulf. In the 1970s Iraq offered France the most lucrative opportunities in this respect, and from 1975 cooperation was extended to include nuclear issues. We saw in chapters 3 and 4 that oil supplies were uppermost in French policy makers' considerations, most notably during the 1973 oil crisis. In both cases France's privileged ties with Iraq and Saudi Arabia helped ensure supplies. However, from 1979 onwards, oil supplies declined in importance. Oil supplies from Iraq declined due both to the Iran-Iraq war and changes in the

international oil market. From 1983 French oil giants TOTAL (as CFP had become known) and Elf were required to purchase Iraqi oil by the state as a means of Iraq paying her mounting debts to France, rather than because France was unable to obtain oil from other sources. This aspect of the thesis undoubtedly requires additional analysis, as well as the provision of additional statistical data. An overview of overall trade and oil flows, as well the fluctuations in and profile of Iraqi debts would allow the grounding of the arguments more solidly within international political economy, and would enable the placing of the narrative format of the text in a clearer economic context. This in turn would enable better comparative study (with British, German and other countries' trade with Iraq) and a clearer understanding of France's overall role in Iraq's external commerce.

2 Secondly, overall, the text attempted to analyse the notion that *French foreign policy making is somehow "different"; that it has unique characteristics differentiating both the policy process and its objectives from those of comparable states*. This has been examined by looking at two aspects of this alleged specificity; the broad framework and vocabulary of Fifth Republic foreign policy on the one hand, and the often personalised and apparently secretive mechanisms of policy on the other.

Policy objectives: It has been clear that, since de Gaulle established both the broad lines of Fifth Republic policy, and the specific attitude and vocabulary used in Middle Eastern policy, then his successors have extensively used and adapted this framework. This is wrapped-up with the problematic notion of a "pro-Arab" stance taken by de Gaulle and his successors after 1967. As chapter 2 demonstrated, at the time this notion was largely a myth, reflecting chiefly a "normalisation", or reorientation of policy in the mid-sixties, following the particularly close links with the nascent Israeli state forged under the Fourth Republic, notably in the realm of arms supplies. However, as chapter 5 showed, although the vocabulary of policy remained, de Gaulle's successor, George Pompidou, significantly extended and refined France's policy towards the Arab states of the Middle East. Policy was reformulated within the framework of an overarching "Mediterranean policy". This incorporated a close post-1969 relationship with Libya, as well as tighter commercial relations with the Gulf states. This latter policy, and the composition of a more

coherent stance involving French and European energy policy, was honed under Pompidou's last foreign minister, Michel Jobert, in 1973/74.

Policy process: In terms of the personalised and secretive mechanisms of foreign policy, the thesis has shown that these factors were abundant throughout the formulation of Middle Eastern policy. Indeed it is noteworthy that two recent, serious studies of French foreign policy both posit this characteristic as an issue for those interested in the study of French Fifth Republic policy ¹. Several examples of this have been used: it would seem probable that non-official channels were used to open France's relationship with both Saudi Arabia and Libya in the late sixties (see chapter 5). Secondly, beneath the relationship with Iraq were a series of private and commercial advisors who were constantly present in Middle Eastern arms and oil policy circles over the seventies and eighties ². The third, and most public examples of the use of personal networks was over the hostages issue (see ch.7 section 4). This again requires a far deeper understanding of the links between French and Iranian, Syrian and Shia movements; both in Lebanon and West Africa. Yet a key issue, beyond the scope of this thesis, is whether this trait is really unique to France. Given the overlapping interests of state, oil and arms companies, did not other countries with which France was competing in the Middle East similarly use private and parallel channels of communication with Arab leaders? Certainly the middlemen and go-betweens of Arabian princes feature heavily in the fragmentary literature on Britain's relationship with the region ³. It also raises the issue of the division between state and non-state actors and the problems this poses for the analysis of international relations. This comparative consideration has a bearing on the third issue.

¹ Destremau, B. *Le Quai d'Orsay derrière la façade*, Plon, Paris, 1994, and Cohen, S. *La monarchie nucléaire, les coulisses de la politique étrangère sous la Ve république*, Paris, Hachette, 1986, both open on this issue. Destremau's point stemming from François Mitterrand's extensive use of personal emissaries to explain his position in the 1990/91 Gulf war, which mirrored the use he had made of such tactics after coming to power in 1981.

² See the end of ch.3. This version of the text had been unable to sufficiently highlight the personal *trajectoires* of key individuals in the oil and petroleum sectors. This requires further illustration. Viewed from the end of the 1990s, it is clear that continuity extends well beyond the watershed of August 1990. See ch.7 section 6. Yet another aspect of this personalised dimension is the manner in which Jacques Chirac maintained his "personal" foreign policy as mayor of Paris during 1977-1986, and the degree to which links beyond France played a role for rivals within the context of the divided Gaullist movement.

³ Styan, D. "French and British trade and arms sales to Iraq, 1980-91; contrasting attitudes and raising questions", paper to the EURASMES conference, Aix, July 1996, pp.21.

3 Thirdly, a subsidiary objective of the thesis has been to *evaluate the interplay of private and state interests* influencing Fifth Republic foreign policy. In particular the way in which both private and state oil and armaments companies interacted with the foreign policy milieu has been examined. Here two separate spheres of French industry and policy have been important; arms and oil, the interests of individuals in both sectors overlapping considerably in dealings with both Iraq and other states of the Gulf. The text has tried to show, by tracing the careers of men such as Pierre Guillaumat (CEA, minister, Elf), André Giraud (DICA, CEA, minister) or Hughes de L'Estoile (DGA, Dassault) that narrow groups of political and technical experts (all of them men) occupied a succession of influential posts in successive Fifth Republic administrations linking the spheres of formal government offices (ministries, ministerial cabinets etc.), para-statal entities, be it state-owned companies such as Elf or "advisory" bodies such as the powerful *délégation générale pour l'armement* (DGA, involved in arms research and export promotion). Companies in the private sector, notably Dassault Aviation have at times been more closely involved with foreign policy than entities in the state sector ⁴. The text has tried to show the degree to which the shared values and background of personnel in these entities, and their frequent shifting of jobs within and between spheres that have provided the coherence to French policy vis-à-vis Iraq over almost three decades.

4 Analytically this third point (French public/private interests) can be linked to two broader debates. The first is in terms of the fairly well established body of writing on *French elites and the related nature of "technocratic" power* in the highly centralised and hierarchical French Fifth republic ⁵. The second is the less well-established question of *the existence and power of a "military-industrial lobby"* in France. The question of the power of the DGA, its relationship with major

⁴ On Dassault and Chirac's entourage, see Schwatzbord, Dassault, le dernier round, O.Oban, 1991. Schwartzbrod's *Le président qui n'aimait pas la guerre; dans les coulisses du pouvoir militaire 1981-1995*, Plon, Paris, 1995 also contains insights into this. A more recent view of Chirac's foreign policy is Coudurier, H. *Le Monde selon Chirac; les coulisses de la diplomatie française*, Calman-Lévy, Paris, 1998, especially ch.4 "Chirac superstar du monde arabe".

⁵ Howorth, J, Cerny, P.G. *Elites in France: origins, reproduction and power*, Pinter, London, 1981. Serls, E. "ministerial cabinets and elite theory", ch. 10 in Howorth, 1980. Suleiman, E.N. *Elites in French society*, Princeton U.P. Princeton, 1978. Birnbaum, P. (ed) *Les élites socialistes au pouvoir, 1981-85*, puf, Paris, 1985.

aeronautical interests, notably the “gang of four” in the late seventies and early eighties (Dassault, Thompson, Matra, Aerospatiale ⁶) have become the subject of considerable debate amongst French academics and policy makers ⁷. This text has attempted to provide a view on this subject via the lens of relations with Iraq. This prompts two, contradictory observations. Firstly it is clear that such interests were crucial in the inception and evolution of relations with Baghdad. However, it is much less clear that they were beyond the control of politicians. The relationship was much more complex and nuanced than that, politicians and technocrats essentially sharing the belief system and culture and thus pursuing common strategies ⁸. While this was presented as being the interest of “France”, it is equally clear that private gain and managerial success played their part, as in all probability did the funding of political campaigns ⁹. Secondly, as with the point about personal envoys above (item 3), it is very unlikely that this was something specifically

⁶ The links, liason and ownership of these have undergone considerable transformation since the early 1980s, when their roles in Iraq were examined by this text.

⁷ Marion, P. *Le Pouvoir sans visage : le complexe militaro-industriel*, Calmann-Lévy, Paris, 1990. Guisnel, J. *Les Généraux : enquête sur le pouvoir militaire en France*, la Découverte, Paris, 1990. Cohen, S. *La défaite des généraux : le pouvoir politique et l'armée sous la Ve République*, Fayard, Paris, 1994.

⁸ The evidence presented in the this thesis could fairly easily be configured to suggest that there is a specific French Fifth Republic orientation or belief system in IR terms, ala Little, R. & Smith, S. *Belief systems and international relations*, Smith. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988.

⁹ As in the UK, the literature and evidence on the links between commissions on Middle East contracts and the funding of domestic politics remains sparse. Although this text has not been able to sufficiently document it, it is probable that some of the action narrated here can only be fully understood in the context of occult financial flows which were helping to fund parties or presidential campaigns at home. Neither Angeli and Mesnier's enquiry, nor obviously this text, were able to document Iraqi funding of French politicians and parties. Yet it is certain that many of the acts, linkages and "friendships" underpinning the Franco-Iraqi relationship can only be fully understood in the context of commissions to individuals and parties on contracts to French companies. This is particularly so given the fragmented and personalised nature of both party and presidential electioneering in France; see Angeli's conclusion, p.226. Saddam Hussein, replying in writing to Angeli's questions, remained silent over party-funding, no doubt mindful of its use in the future... To my knowledge, neither has el-Machath, Iraq's ambassador to France for much of the 1980s, now reportedly exiled in Canada, shed any light on the subject.

Yet even with the partial insights presented here into the links between the aeronautical orders (notably from Iraq and Saudi Arabia), and figures such as Jacques Mitterrand, Hughes de l'Estoile and Dassault, for whom Mitterrand's confidant Francois de Grossouvre worked from 1985, it seems clear that Iraq and other Gulf states were a source of funding for French politicians across the spectrum.

François de Grossouvre - formally simply head of the presidential hunt, but a key confidant and PS financier - committed suicide in the L'Elysée on April 7 1994. This and the suicide of Pierre Bérégovoy the previous May, prompted some closer scrutiny of occult political funds in France. See Montaldo, J, *Mitterrand et les 40 voleurs*, Albin Michel, Paris, 1994 (on Pelat, Pechinay and de Grossouvre). Montaldo, J, *Lettre ouverte d'un chien à François Mitterrand au nom de la liberté d'aboyer*, Albin Michel 1993 (on Bérégovoy). The whole France-Iraq story could be usefully reviewed in the context of these studies and that of recent investigations into Elf and Roland Dumas' affair(e)s.

French. Elites involved in British, German or Japanese business and politics almost certainly behaved in a similar manner, even if the common elites and ethos were founded on different values.

5 As demonstrated throughout the thesis, the burgeoning Franco-Iraqi relationship was just one element in a *broader renaissance of Franco-Arab relations* from the late sixties onwards. The thesis therefore attempts to situate Franco-Iraqi ties within the context of what it terms the “*reinvention of French Arab policy*”. It should be noted that here the term “reinvention” is not at all construed in the “constructivist” sense of international relations theory ¹⁰. Rather it was simply a complete reconstruction and representation of France’s policy stance in the region, built over the discredited ruins of France’s image in the wake of the Algerian war and the Suez debacle of 1956. It should be noted that, notwithstanding the polemics over the existence and/or end of this “Arab policy”, certainly for Jacques Chirac in the mid-nineties the policy remained an important element in his foreign policy projection ¹¹

6 As such, one of the themes of (and indeed a key practical problems in terms of planning and editing ...) this work has been the need to tease out France’s bilateral relations with individual states from the broader framework of the relationship with the Middle East as a whole. This was clearly crucial, albeit it highly problematic, given the pan-Arab stance of many partners. (Although it should also be noted that the cosmopolitanism, in terms both of origin and outlook of key decision makers in France, undoubtedly played a role ¹².) At least four separate spheres could be identified here: 1. the Arab:Israeli conflict, as during the ’67 and 1973 wars. 2. French attitudes to Palestine in particular, internecine Palestinian

¹⁰ Barnett, M. *Dialogues in Arab politics : negotiations in regional order*, Columbia University Press, NY, 1998. However, it should be noted that a recent French work partially but convincingly apply such a reading to French policy; Chérigui, Hayète. *La politique méditerranéenne de la France : entre diplomatie collective et leadership*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1997.

¹¹ Chirac re-presented Gaullist Arab and Mediterranean policy in keynote speeches during a Middle Eastern tour in April 1996: See “l'Orient compliqué de Jacques Chirac” *Le Monde*, 18.4.96; “L'impossible politique arabe de la France gaulliste”, *Libération*, 16.4.96.

¹² Several key French players were themselves born in the Empire, perceiving themselves for example as much Maghrebian as French, Michel Jobert being a good example. Others were not French by birth, Paul Depis for example. In addition the pivotal role of Algerian diplomats for the French needs emphasising.

struggles included, both in France and the Lebanon ¹³. 3. The Iran Iraq war, where France's support for Iraq clearly prompted conflict with Iran (chapter 6). 4. Finally the degree to which French stances towards Palestine, or the Iran:Iraq war, influenced other Arab states and leaders' attitudes to France. French military support for Iraq was very explicitly linked by conservative Arab Gulf states to their trade with France in the 1980s. This was clear both in terms of the Saudi oil barter deals to pay Iraqi debts from 1983 onwards, and France's impressive export record of military equipment to smaller Gulf states. Clearly such inter-linkages pose problems for IR theory and attempts to separate out individual state interests. The particular characteristics of the Middle East (pan-Arabism, Arab:Iranian rivalry etc.) clearly contribute to this, but yet again, these are issues faced by all states dealing with the region, and further comparative work would be required before we could definitively demonstrate that the French approach to the region was radically different to that of their competitors ¹⁴.

7 A factor somewhat neglected in this version of the text, is the degree to which there were, almost entirely at the rhetorical level, supposed "ideological affinities" between French and Iraqi leaders. However improbable this may seem, the notion of a common political outlook between Gaullism and Iraqi Baathism proved to be a perennial feature of speeches and articles for twenty years. It was seen in chapter 5 that as early as 1972 France was praising the Baathist leadership for their political outlook. This notion of ideological affinity, real or imagined, was developed by Jacques Chirac when praising Saddam Hussein's "nationalism and socialism" in 1974 and 1975 (chapter 5). Yet this notion of Saddam Hussein as an "Arab de Gaulle" ¹⁵ was developed extensively by both right and left wing politicians in the late 1970s. The latter included in particular Cheysson and Chevènement ¹⁶. This notion was accelerated from 1979 as French opinion (particularly in terms of the state being *laïque* – secular) turned against Iran, seeing it

¹³ Particularly as Iraq supported rejectionist factions such as Abu Nidal in the late seventies, see ch.5.

¹⁴ In terms of FPA, there is also the issue that by 1984 different factions in *both* Iranian and French foreign policy apparatuses were struggling over bilateral relations. This was very different from the Franco:Iraqi relationship, where consensus had been quickly, and in the Iraqi case, ruthlessly, established.

¹⁵ Saint-Prot, C. Saddam Hussein : un gaullisme arabe?, Albin Michel, Paris 1987.

¹⁶ Chevènement, J.-P. Le vert et le noir: intégrisme, pétrole, dollar, B. Grasset, Paris, 1995.

as a religious, fundamentalist and thus backward power. Evidently hostage taking and terrorism by Iran or its proxies of 1983-88 greatly exacerbated such a view.

The thesis has thus attempted to link together a series of themes crucial to the understanding the making of contemporary French foreign policy. It has demonstrated how the evolving Franco-Iraqi relationship was central to the broader reinvention of Franco-Arab relations from the late sixties onwards. Although the thesis focuses entirely on the period prior to 1990, clearly the alliances and beliefs within the French foreign policy establishment which it analyses had an impact upon attitudes in France following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. This was true not only during the military campaign against Iraq in 1990/91, but also subsequently in terms of diverse French attitudes towards sanctions on Iraq over the subsequent decade. It is clear that the diverse and contradictory reactions among French actors to Iraq since August 1990, and the literature and debates that this has spawned, can only be fully understood in the light of the histories narrated in this thesis.

Appendix A

vc

Abbreviations

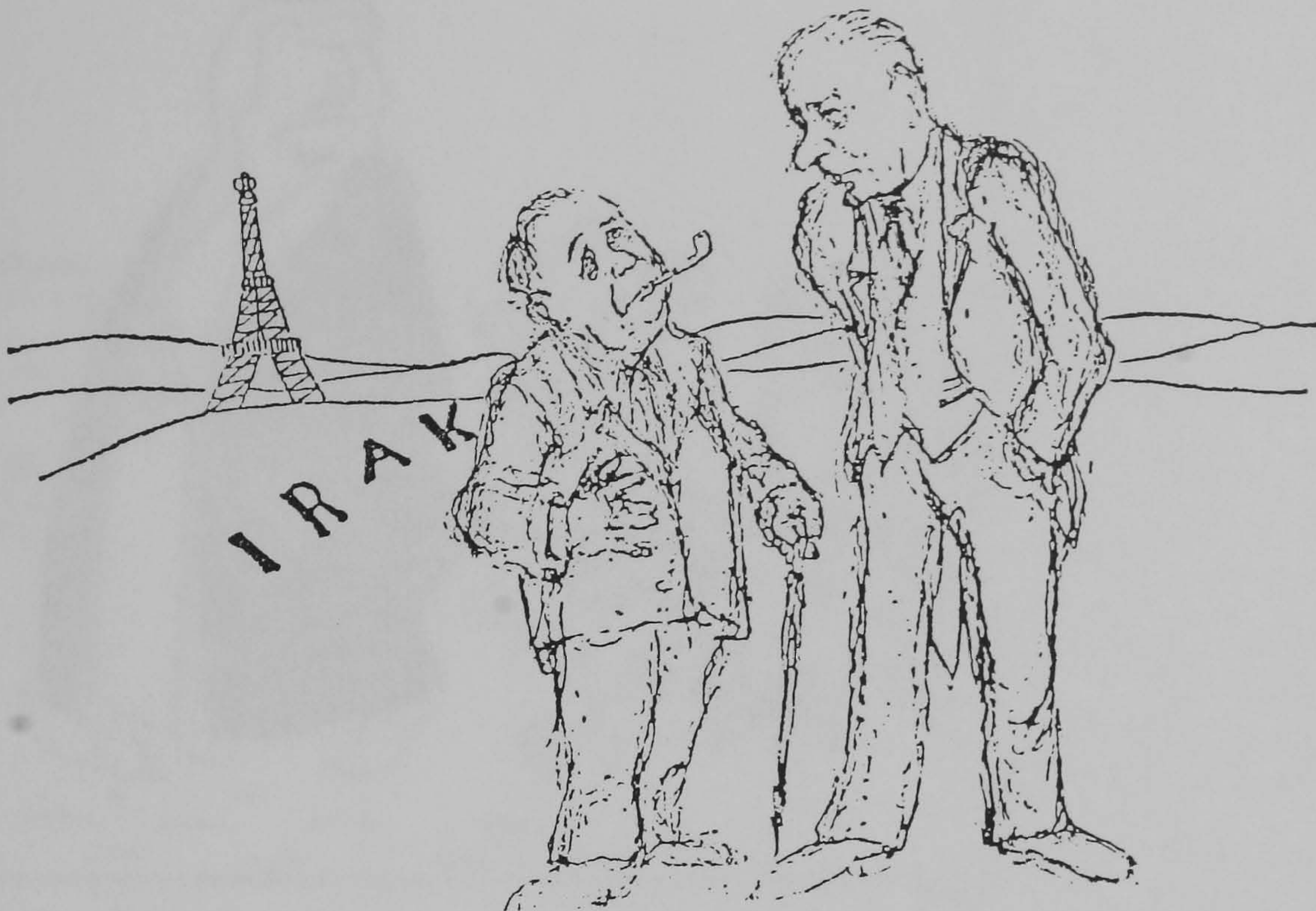
| | |
|--------|--|
| AAFI | <i>Association des amitiés franco-irakiennes</i> |
| AFICE | <i>Association franco-irakienne de coopération économique</i> |
| ASFA | <i>Association de solidarité franco-arabe</i> |
| ASMP | <i>(missile) air-sol de moyenne portée</i> |
| BFA | <i>Banque franco-arabe</i> |
| BRP | <i>Bureau de recherches de pétrole</i> |
| CCFA | <i>Chambre de commerce franco-arabe</i> |
| CEA | <i>Commissariat à l'énergie atomique, nuclear energy and exports regulator</i> |
| GCT | <i>(Canon à) grande cadence de tir (155 artillery)</i> |
| CFP | <i>Compagnie française des pétroles (formed 1924,became TOTAL)</i> |
| CGP | <i>Comité général du pétrole, 1917 domestic oil regulatory body</i> |
| CIEEMG | <i>Commission interministérielle pour l'étude des exportations de matériels de guerre</i> |
| CNIM | <i>Constructions navales et industrielles de la Méditerranée</i> |
| CSPPA | <i>Comité de solidarité avec les prisonniers politiques arabes et du Moyen-Orient (front claiming responsibility for 1986 attacks in France)</i> |
| DMA | <i>Délégué ministériel pour l'armement (head of DGA)</i> |
| DGA | <i>Délégation générale pour l'armement</i> |
| DICA | <i>Directeur de carbons (of ministry of industry)</i> |
| DSGE | <i>Direction générale de la sécurité et de la défense</i> |
| DST | <i>Direction de la surveillance du territoire</i> |
| ERAP | <i>Enterprise de recherches et d'activités pétrolières</i> |
| FARL | <i>Fractions armées révolutionnaires libanaises (Lebanese/Syrian group demanding release of George Ibrahim Abdullah)</i> |

| | |
|-------|---|
| FLN | (Algerian) <i>Front de libération nationale</i> |
| GRPA | <i>Gouvernement provisoire de la république algériennne</i> |
| GIFAS | <i>Groupement des industries françaises aéronautiques et spatiales</i> |
| IAEA | International Atomic Energy Agency |
| ICP | Iraqi Communist Party |
| IFP | <i>Institut français des pétroles</i> |
| INOC | Iraq National Oil Company |
| IPC | Iraq Petroleum Company (1928-1972) |
| OGA | <i>Office générale de l'air</i> |
| ONCL | <i>Office national des combustibles liquides</i> , 1925 regulatory body |
| OFEMA | <i>Office français d'exportation de matériel aéronautique</i> |
| OAPEC | Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries |
| OPEC | Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries |
| PS | (French) <i>Parti socialiste</i> |
| RCC | (Iraqi) Revolutionary Command Council |
| SGDN | <i>Secrétariat général de la défense nationale</i> |
| TPC | Turkish Petroleum Company (name of IPC's predecessor 1912-1928) |
| UAR | United Arab Republic |
| UBAF | <i>l'Union des banques arabes et françaises</i> |
| UGP | <i>Union générales des pétroles</i> |

Appendix B Cartoons and illustrations

These are just a small selection of the dozens of cartoons which could be used to illustrate the episodes narrated in the thesis. Constraints of reproduction and time mean that many other cartoons, illustrations and the numerous photos of ministerial visits etc. have been omitted from this version. There are numerous photos of the 1968, 1972 and 1975 Iraqi leaders' visits to France, and French ministerial trips to Baghdad. These could be supplemented by cartoons from Middle Eastern publications.

vc - nine pages, (numbered I-IX)



Cartoons in the 1960s were rarer. This one, accompanied an article by Pierre Rossi, entitled “Le pétrole de la liberté” which appeared in *Votre République*, 9.2.68, to coincide with General Aref’s trip to Paris. The caption has Wilson asking “*comment dit-on pétrole en français?*”; How do you say petrol in French?.

IRANIEN DÉPITÉ MAIS COMPRÉHENSIF



PAS ÉTONNANT
QU’ILS NOUS LIVRENT
PAS DE VEGETTES....
ELLES SONT TOUTES
ENGAGÉES DANS LA
CAMPAGNE
ÉLECTORALE

(Dessin de Karleroux)

Iranian “understanding” at France’s refusal to release the patrol boats ordered by the Shah and then embargoed by France. *Le Canard enchainé*, 4.3.81.

The frequent trips of French ministers to Baghdad and the arrival of oil-rich Gulf Arab leaders in Paris in the mid-seventies prompted numerous cartoons.



Giscard d'Estaing and Raymond Barre chasing the coattails of King Khaled of Saudi Arabia during his visit to Paris in May 1978. Le Monde 1.6.78.

Le Monde 11.7.79



Le Matin 11.7.79.



Premier Raymond Barre's 1979 "oil crisis" trip to the Gulf

There are also numerous images of both Michel Jobert and Giscard in Arab dress. Jobert's trips to the Middle East in 1974-74 also prompted predictable cartoons in Middle Eastern publications.

Cohabitation coupled with a more assertive press and Chirac's dealings over the hostages prompted many critical images



Le Canard enchaîné, 26.11.86

Le Matin, 19.1.87





Libération 19.9.86 (Front page, "La France au proche-orient: Histoire d'un fiasco diplomatique")



Libération 15.7.87 (Front page, "France-Iran: haute tension"; the "battle of the embassies")

The running polemic over Chirac's responsibility in negotiating Iraq's nuclear programme resurfaced in a spat between Chirac and Michel d'Ornano, Giscard's (UDF) former industry minister, in mid-1986, and then again when Michel Noir visited Baghdad in August 1987.

vi

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE 18 Juin 1976

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

Décret n° 76-524 du 14 juin 1976 portant publication de l'accord de coopération entre le Gouvernement de la République française et le Gouvernement de la République irakienne pour l'utilisation de l'énergie nucléaire à des fins pacifiques, ensemble une annexe, signé à Bagdad le 18 novembre 1975 (1).

Le Président de la République,
Sur le rapport du Premier ministre et du ministre des affaires étrangères,
Vu les articles 52 à 55 de la Constitution ;
Vu le décret n° 53-192 du 14 mars 1953 relatif à la ratification et à la publication des engagements internationaux souscrits par la France,

Décète :

Art. 1^{er}. — L'accord de coopération entre le Gouvernement de la République française et le Gouvernement de la République irakienne pour l'utilisation de l'énergie nucléaire à des fins pacifiques, ensemble une annexe, signé à Bagdad le 18 novembre 1975, sera publié au Journal officiel de la République française.

Art. 2. — Le Premier ministre et le ministre des affaires étrangères sont chargés de l'exécution du présent décret.

Fait à Paris, le 14 juin 1976.

VALÉRY GISCARD D'ESTAING

Par le Président de la République :
Le Premier ministre,
JACQUES CHIRAC.

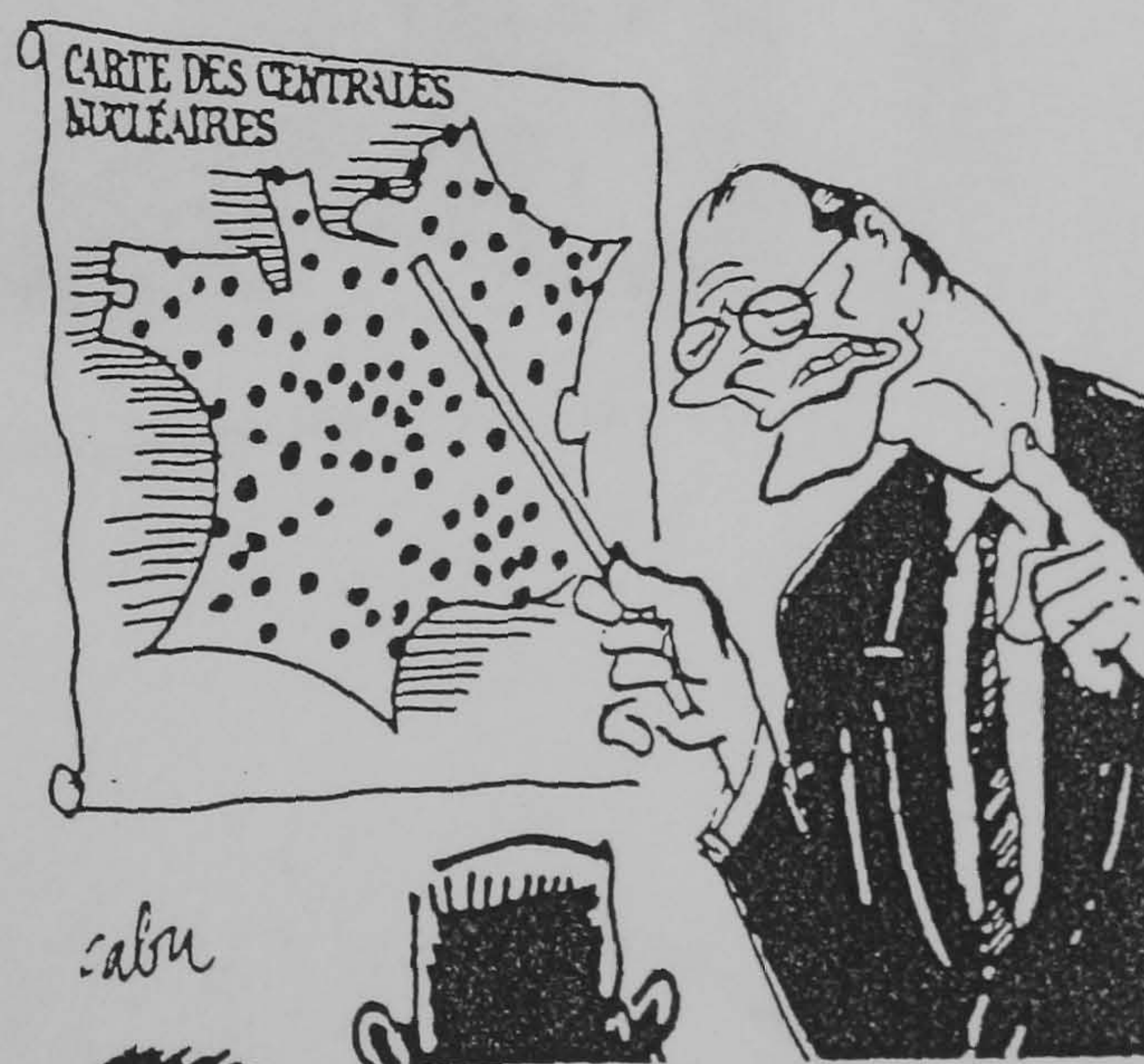
Le ministre des affaires étrangères,
JEAN SAUVAGNARGUES.

Le Matin, 20.8.86.

LE TEXTE DU « JOURNAL OFFICIEL » DU 18 JUIN 1976 PORTANT LA SIGNATURE DE JACQUES CHIRAC



Le Canard enchaîné, 12.8.87



— La France a trop de centrales... Elle peut se permettre d'en donner une aux pauvres !



L'Evènement du jeudi, 13.9.90 (original in colour)

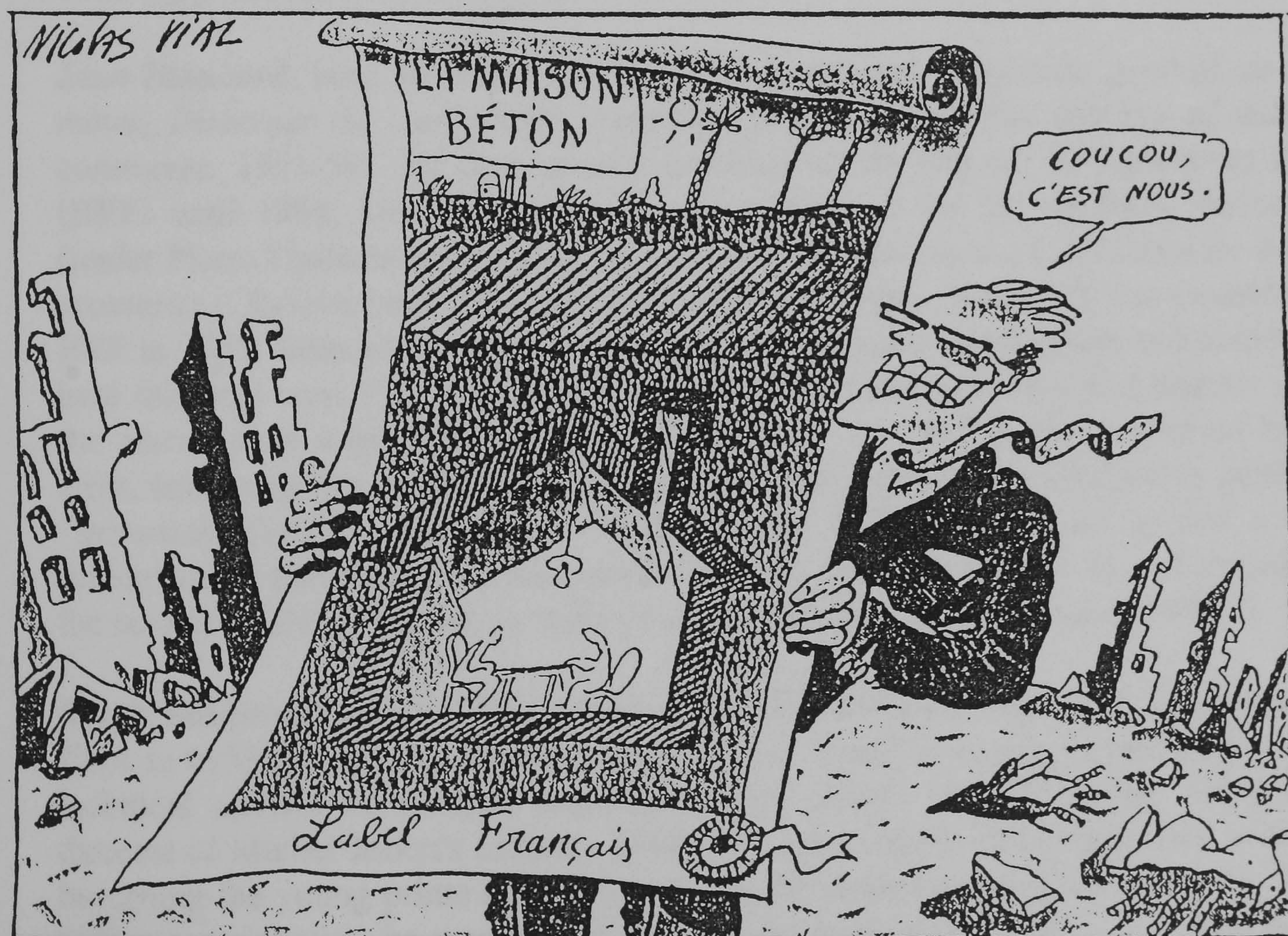


L'Évènement du jeudi, 13.9.90. Mitterrand and Chirac *en vacances* (Stirn being a member of the Front National...)

Gordji entendu par le Juge



Le Monde 29.01.88



Le Monde 22.2.91 (article entitled "Les industriels français toujours fascinés par l'Irak")

Appendix C. The interlinked backgrounds and careers of key figures in France's oil, energy and arms policies.

vc

The introduction suggested that continuity in French policy towards Iraq can be understood in part via the shared outlooks and backgrounds of a relatively small number of men involved in decision making, notably experts who occupied a succession of influential posts in France's oil, arms and nuclear industries during successive Fifth Republic administrations. Key figures had a shared educational background; many were graduates of the *Ecole polytechnique* and its elite *Corps des mines*. Such a background enabled men such as Pierre Guillaumat and Jean Blancard and their proteges from the *corps* to move between and within the key ministries and industrial bodies central to this text. These included the *Commissariat à l'énergie atomique* (CEA), the *Délégation générale pour l'armement* (DGA) and the various organisations constituting France's oil milieu. The latter include the oil industries strategic research body, the *Institut français des pétroles* (IFP), as well as both the various companies amalgamated in the sixties as Elf/ERAP, and CFP/Total, whose roots in Iraq were traced in chapter one.

A similar pattern emerges when one looks at key personnel of the DGA and the main aeronautical companies, Dassault, Aérospatiale, Matra etc. Many younger figures, notably diplomats, also shared a background in Paris' *Institut d'études politiques* (IEP) and the *Ecole nationale d'administration* (ENA). Several were also colleagues in ministerial cabinets, notably during Pompidou's presidency, in the sixties and seventies¹. The thumbnail biographies of the following eleven figures who featured repeatedly in the preceding chapters serve to partially illustrate manner in which their careers overlapped at differing points in the Fifth Republic.

Jean Blancard, born 1914 in Paris. *Ecole polytechnique*, ingénieur général au corps des mines, *Directeur des carburants*, when DICA was part of the ministry of industry and commerce, 1951-59. He then became president of the *Bureau de recherches de pétrole* (BRP) until 1965, also serving as *délégué ministériel* for the air force during 1959-61 (under Pierre Guillaumat). In 1961 he was also involved in the *Commissariat à l'énergie atomique* (CEA) as head of its industrial plan committee. When Elf was created by fusing BRP in 1965, Blancard became vice-president and head of exploration and production. He held this post until 1968. During this period he was also president and director general of the aeronautical engine manufacturer, SNECMA. In 1968 he then switched from oil to arms, becoming the *Délégué ministériel pour l'armement* at the *Délégation générale pour l'armement* (DGA) until 1973. In the period 1974-77 Blancard gained a clutch of directorships; presiding over the board of Gaz de France (from 1975), and getting seats on the boards of SNCF, as well as both Elf-Aquitaine and CFP. He died in 1990(?).

Serge Boidevaux, Born 1928, educated at Louis-le-Grand, then IEP, he graduated from ENA in 1953 and entered the diplomatic service. Under Pompidou's presidency he became technical advisor to defense minister Michel Debré 1969-73 before being appointed director of Michel Jobert's cabinet. Unlike his boss Jobert, Boidevaux then joined Chirac, becoming the young prime minister's advisor for international affairs 1974-76. Following Chirac's resignation he was named ambassador to Poland in 1977, and then became the

director of the North Africa & Middle East section of the Quai d'Orsay 1980-82. After a spell as ambassador to India 1982-85, he returned to Paris as joint secretary general of the Quai 1985-86, was ambassador to Germany between 1986-92, before briefly acting as Secretary General of the Quai.

Marc Bonnefous, born 1924, Bordeaux, graduated from ENA in 1947. A diplomat, he was in the cabinet of Yves Guéna in 1967, thence named ambassador to Congo-Brazzaville 1970-72, where Elf had key mineral deposits. Was ambassador to Israel between 1978-82, and then became director of the North Africa & Middle East section of the Quai d'Orsay 1982-86, replacing Serge Boidevaux. He was then promoted to deputy Secretary-General 1986-87. During *cohabitation* he was named ambassador to the OECD. Since retiring he has written two books, one on the Maghreb (1991) one on north:south relations (1997).

François Bujon, (also called Bujon d'Estang). Born 1940, graduated from ENA in 1966. After spells in the USA and UK, he became advisor for international affairs at the *délégation général de l'énergie* 1975-77. He was then director of international relations at the CEA between 1978-80, before becoming the director André Giraud's cabinet when the latter was minister of industry under Raymond Barre. He was president of *Cogema* 1982-86, briefly ambassador to Mexico 1986. On Jacques Chirac's election as prime minister in 1986, Bujon became the premier's advisor on political, diplomatic and defense affairs. After cohabitation ended, he became France's ambassador to Canada and, in 1995, the USA.

Eric Desmarest, Born 1942, IEP then ENA in 1969. After serving in Morocco, in 1971 he became a diplomatic advisor to the ministry of defense, rising to becoming Director of Diplomatic Affairs in the ministry between 1974-78. Between 1978-81 he shifted to become a technical advisor to the Quai d'Orsay. Between 1981-86 he was simply *chargé de mission* in the Quai, while apparently also retaining close links with the entourage of Jacques Chirac, then mayor of Paris. With the return of a right-wing government, Desmarest was appointed as *Directeur de cabinet* of foreign minister, Jean-Bernard Raimond. Following the defeat of the right, between 1988 and 1990 he switched to become head of Dassault's international affairs. In 1990 he returned to the Quai d'Orsay. In 1993 he became a personal envoy, particularly for international issues, for Charles Pasqua. In 1995 founded a private consultancy company, *Stratégies et synergies internationales*.

Andre Giraud, born 1925, Bordeaux. From the *Ecole polytechnique* he joined the *Institut français des pétroles*, then becoming *Directeur des carburants*, in the ministry of industry 1964-69. He was also vice-president of Renault 1965-71. He became *directeur de cabinet* for Olivier Guichard, minister of education, 1969-70. Between 1970-78 he was the French government's representative on the board of the CEA 70-78. Promoted to *Ingénieur général des mines* in 1973, he then headed the *Ecole Polytechnique's* council of administration, 1974-78. President of the *Compagnie générale des matières nucléaires* 1976-78, he was minister of industry 1978-81. After a spell as an academic (writing the sole standard French text book on the oil industry) at Paris Dauphine, when Chirac came to power he became minister of defense 1986-88. Subsequently he took several directorships (St Gobain, Banque Arjil, head of Elf's international council). Giraud died on 27.7.97

Pierre Guillaumat, born 1909, son of Adolphe, France's minister of war. Educated at the *Ecole polytechnique*, becoming *Ingénieur au corps des mines*. He was chief of service of mines in Indochine, then Tunisia, before becoming *Directeur des carburants* in the ministry of industry 1944-51. He was the government's representative on the board of the CEA 1951-58, and president of the board of *Bureau de recherches de pétrole* (BRP) 1945-51 and 1954-59. On coming to power in 1958, de Gaulle made him minister for armed forces, a position he held in the cabinet of Michel Debré until 1960. Between 1962-66 he was head of *Union générales des pétroles* (UGP), and after the French oil industry restructuring in the mid-1960s, headed Elf-Aquitaine, a post he held until 1977. He was also on the board of CFP between 1971-74. Like Andre Giraud, he also presided over the *Ecole Polytechnique's* council of administration. One of the acknowledged "barons" of Gaullism, he died on 28.08.91.

Michel Jobert, Was born in Meknes, Morocco in 1921, ENA 47-48, Had administrative role in Mendès France's governments 1954-6, then French West Africa, before becoming *directeur de cabinet* of De Gaulle's premier Pompidou. When the latter became president in 1969, Jobert became the *secrétaire général* of the Elysée. He was minister of foreign affairs between April 1974 and Pompidou's death. While in charge of the Quai, he formed the *Centre d'analyse et de prévision* (CAP). Despite his brief tenure as foreign minister, his highly public argument with US secretary of state Kissenger over energy policy, and frequent visits to the Middle East, meant Jobert remains one of the most remembered French foreign ministers in both France and the Arab world. Having little sympathy with Giscard or Chirac, in 1974 Jobert then returned to the *Cour des Comptes*. He then founded his own party, the *Mouvement des démocrates*, and wrote extensively. Following Mitterrand's election, Jobert became minister of state for external commerce. As explained in chapter six, his appointment, coupled with cordial relations with fellow ministers Chevènement and Cheysson, served to reassure Arab states as to the continuity of French policy towards Arab states. As minister, he was again active in promoting trade with the Middle East. He resigning in March 1984, again writing extensively. Like Cheysson and Chevènement, he was publicly opposed to French participation in the 1990/91 war, on which he published a book *Journal du Golfe Aout 1990-Aout 1991*.

Hughes de L'Estoile (de), born 1931. Educated in the *Ecole Polytechnique*, and then *école nationale supérieure de l'aéronautique* ("aerosup"). Created the *Centre de prospective et d'évaluation du ministère des armées* in the Ministry of Defense. Between 1964-70 he was technical advisor to Pierre Messmer and then Michel Debre in the Ministry of Defense. He then moved to the *Délégation générale pour l'armement* where from 1970 he was *directeur des affaires internationales*. Promoted *Ingénieur général de 1e classe de l'armement*, between 1974-77 he was in the ministry of industry, as well as on the boards of both the CEA 74-77, and Renault 74-77. In 1979 he joined the board of the *Office français d'exportation de matériel aéronautique* (OFEMA) and in 1986 also joined *Groupeement des industries françaises aéronautiques et spatiales* (GIFAS). From 1977 he was director-general, and then from 1986 vice-president of the international affairs section of Dassault Aviation, presumably working with both Eric Desmarest and president Mitterrand's confidant, François de Grossouvre (see conclusion, fn 9). Actively pushing sales of Mirage2000 to Baghdad for Dassault in 1990, curiously, his "Who's Who in France" entry

states that in 1990/91 he acted as a personal envoy for president Mitterrand. He died on 23.11.1993.

Jacques Mitterrand, born 1918, two years after his brother François. Followed a military career after St-Cyr. Left the army to become the head of Aérospatiale, a post he held 1975-83. He also sat on the board of the CEA in 1975. Between 1981-85 he was the overall president of the *Groupeement des industries françaises aéronautiques et spatiales* (GIFAS) and also headed GIFAS's export committee. He was also president of the *Office générale de l'air* (OGA)

Jean-Bernard Raimond, born 1926, graduated from ENA 1956-58. Served in the Quai d'Orsay 1956-66 and was deputy director of the ministry in 1967. He was technical advisor to Pompidou firstly as prime minister 1968-69, then president 1970-73. In 1973 he became ambassador to Morocco, returning in 1977 to head the North Africa and Levant section of the Quai d'Orsay. He was briefly *directeur de cabinet* for the minister of foreign affairs 1978-79, then head of cultural affairs in the Quai, thence ambassador to Poland (1982-84), the Soviet Union (1985-86). When Chirac became premier, Raimond returned to become foreign minister. Thereafter he was named to the Vatican. He was elected an RPR *député* in 1993, and has served as a vice-president of the commission of foreign affairs in the national assembly. While a diplomat, unlike many of his peers in this milieu, Raimond did not have a technical background in oil or armaments.

Sources:

For works on Guillaumat's life and influence, the volume of essays by Soutou, G.-M. et al (eds), *Pierre Guillaumat, la passion des grandes projets industrielles*, eds. rive droit, Paris 1995. Péan P, Sérén, J-P, *Les Emirs de la république*, Seuil, Paris, 1982, traces the links between Guillaumat, Blancard and Giraud. See also the contributions by Guillaumat and Blancard themselves, pp. 222-226 in vol. 3 of *De Gaulle en son siècle : actes des Journées internationales tenues à l'Unesco*, La Documentation française & Plon, Paris, 1992.

¹ As noted in chapter five (section four) several of these figures also formed the rump of France's strategic studies and international relations community, See Schwartzbrod, 1995.

Appendix D French ambassadors to Iraq; 1963-1990

| | |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Le Gourrière / Dumarçay | 16.2.63 |
| Pierre Gorce | 21.3.67 |
| (Pierre) Cerles | 11.2.70 |
| Jacques Morizet | 9.10.75 |
| Pierre Rocalve | 27.3.80 |
| Paul Depis | 26.11.81 |
| Maurice Courage | 7.12.84 |
| Relations formally broken | 8.2.91 |

Appendix E Theses written by Iraqis in French universities

As noted in the introduction, as part of the technical and educational exchanges between France and Iraq, several hundred Iraqis wrote theses in French universities during the 1980s. While many were in natural sciences, of those in social sciences, only a handful dealt with aspects of Franco-Iraqi relations.

Al Dahir, Samir, *La politique extérieure de la Vème république au proche orient arabe; le cas de l'Irak et du Liban*, Rennes, 1990.

Ahmad, Hameed, *Les relations diplomatiques de la Vème république française avec l'Irak*, Montpellier, 1986.

Ahmad al-Samarrae, Khalil, *La politique extérieure de l'Irak*, Paris III (?), 1984

Omar Fatteh, Haifa, *Les Kurdes de l'Irak vus par l'opinion française 1968-79*, Paris III, 1982.

Khatab, Alika, *L'Irak dans l'opinion et de la vie intellectuelle française, 1968-78*, Paris III, 1981.

Ghafour, Khaliq, *Transferts de technologies nucléaires dans un pays en voie de développement; le cas de l'Irak*, Paris IX, 1979.

Tawfiq, Saad, *Essai sur la politique étrangère de l'Irak, (depuis 1958?)*, Lyon(?), 1978.

Al-Hiti, Abdul Jali, *Relations pétrolières entre l'Irak et la France*, Lyon II, 1977.

As discussed in the introduction, relatively few French theses and other works deal with Iraq. Several archaeological studies were undertaken, notably under the supervision of Jean-Louis Huot in the Sorbonne. Pierre-Jean Luizard, who subsequently became an Iraq specialist with CNRS wrote his thesis on Iraqi Shia history. He also edited the excellent special edition of "*Monde Arabe; mémoires d'Irakienes*", No.163, Jan-Mar 1999. Documentation Française, Paris.

Appendix F: Selected statistics

| | |
|---------|--|
| Table 1 | Major arms suppliers to Iraq, 1951-85 |
| Table 2 | Share of suppliers of major conventional weapons to the Middle East, 1951-85 |
| Table 3 | Value of imports of major weapons by Iraq, 1951-85 |
| Table 4 | Iraq, principal supplies, imports by country, 1960-1990 |
| Table 5 | Iraq, principal export markets, 1969-1990 |

vc – four pages (numbered I-IV)

Table 1: Major arms suppliers to Iraq, 1951-1985, % shares

| | USSR | France | UK | Total 1985 \$m |
|------------|------|--------|-----|----------------|
| 1951 to 55 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 71 |
| 1956 to 60 | 78 | 0 | 10 | 257 |
| 1961 to 65 | 75 | 0 | 25 | 729 |
| 1966 to 70 | 88 | 4 | 2 | 787 |
| 1971 to 75 | 97 | 2 | 0 | 2042 |
| 1976 to 80 | 85 | 10 | 0 | 5559 |
| 1981 to 85 | 55 | 22 | 0 | 15170 |

Source: Brozka, M. Ohlson, T. Arms transfers to the Third World, 1971-85, Sipri-OUP, Oxford, 1987

Table 2: Share of suppliers of major conventional weapons to the Middle East, 1951-85

| | USSR | USA | France | UK | Other | Total in 1985 \$ m. |
|------------|------|-----|--------|----|-------|---------------------|
| 1951 to 55 | 5 | 15 | 20 | 43 | 15 | 761 |
| 1956 to 60 | 48 | 14 | 11 | 7 | 19 | 2760 |
| 1961 to 65 | 49 | 29 | 11 | 9 | 1 | 4946 |
| 1966 to 70 | 49 | 35 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 16392 |
| 1971 to 75 | 45 | 41 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 35217 |
| 1976 to 80 | 27 | 54 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 39510 |
| 1981 to 85 | 33 | 32 | 16 | 4 | 15 | 56510 |

Source: Brozka, M. Ohlson, 1987.

Table 3: Value of imports of major weapons by Iraq, 1951-85, \$m.

| | | | |
|------------|-----|---------------------|------|
| 1951 | 2 | 1971 | 233 |
| 1952 | 0 | 1972 | 106 |
| 1953 | 20 | Oil nationalisation | |
| 1954 | 18 | 1973 | 659 |
| 1955 | 31 | 1974 | 744 |
| 1956 | 27 | 1975 | 300 |
| 1957 | 19 | 1976 | 792 |
| 1958 | 45 | 1977 | 1008 |
| Revolution | | 1978 | 1218 |
| 1959 | 90 | 1979 | 806 |
| 1960 | 76 | Iran-Iraq war | |
| 1961 | 55 | 1980 | 1734 |
| 1962 | 188 | 1981 | 2314 |
| 1963 | 157 | 1982 | 1837 |
| 1964 | 202 | 1983 | 2809 |
| 1965 | 127 | 1984 | 4718 |
| 1966 | 107 | 1985 | 3492 |
| 1967 | 128 | | |
| 1968 | 172 | | |
| 1969 | 183 | | |
| 1970 | 196 | | |

Source: Brozska, M. Ohlson, T, 1987.

Table 5: Iraq, principal suppliers, imports by country 1969-1990, \$ m.

| | France | USA | UK | Germany * | Japan | Turkey | Italy |
|------|--------|------|------|-----------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1969 | 22 | 16 | 54 | 16 | 35 | 2 | 32 |
| 1970 | 30 | 18 | 61 | 18 | 16 | 8 | 15 |
| 1971 | 43 | 34 | 63 | 23 | 21 | 7 | 22 |
| 1972 | 45 | 29 | 69 | 34 | 32 | 6 | 35 |
| 1973 | 87 | 63 | 73 | 43 | 61 | 15 | 31 |
| 1974 | 188 | 188 | 126 | 191 | 270 | 32 | 79 |
| 1975 | 263 | 370 | 238 | 754 | 765 | 24 | 164 |
| 1976 | 309 | 218 | 273 | 848 | 518 | 31 | 192 |
| 1977 | 252 | 218 | 307 | 802 | 789 | 58 | 228 |
| 1978 | 296 | 426 | 261 | 476 | 881 | 52 | 217 |
| 1979 | 877 | 486 | 470 | 1258 | 1759 | 116 | 741 |
| 1980 | 1179 | 797 | 823 | 1980 | 2413 | 116 | 1037 |
| 1981 | 1601 | 1005 | 1382 | 3179 | 3324 | 615 | 1475 |
| 1982 | 1588 | 931 | 1678 | 3452 | 3019 | 672 | 1827 |
| 1983 | 894 | 563 | 669 | 1618 | 695 | 352 | 878 |
| 1984 | 752 | 731 | 500 | 947 | 884 | 1028 | 691 |
| 1985 | 757 | 470 | 630 | 926 | 1450 | 1058 | 760 |
| 1986 | 534 | 580 | 720 | 715 | 1346 | 793 | 621 |
| 1987 | 404 | 752 | 492 | 508 | 434 | 1041 | 282 |
| 1988 | 470 | 1260 | 809 | 972 | 447 | 1085 | 226 |
| 1989 | 524 | 1291 | 815 | 1286 | 538 | 490 | 409 |
| 1990 | 572 | 704 | 553 | 876 | 298 | 236 | 293 |

* FDR

Note that Brazil was also major purchaser of oil.
The Soviet Union barely figures on IFS data

Source: IMF, direction of trade statistics yearbook, various editions

Table 4: Iraq, principal export markets 1969-1990, \$ m.

| | France | USA | UK | Germany * | Japan | Turkey | Italy |
|------|--------|------|------|-----------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1969 | 207 | 13 | 48 | 30 | 3 | 28 | 252 |
| 1970 | 169 | 21 | 38 | 40 | 0 | 42 | 315 |
| 1971 | 304 | 38 | 65 | 52 | 3 | 44 | 345 |
| 1972 | 268 | 16 | 67 | 29 | 5 | 30 | 250 |
| 1973 | 445 | 16 | 68 | 49 | 3 | 30 | 467 |
| 1974 | 1129 | 2 | 226 | 277 | 183 | 298 | 1060 |
| 1975 | 983 | 21 | 205 | 116 | 360 | 458 | 1512 |
| 1976 | 1449 | 112 | 447 | 141 | 527 | 586 | 1231 |
| 1977 | 1665 | 382 | 528 | 115 | 674 | 629 | 1265 |
| 1978 | 1922 | 241 | 867 | 192 | 712 | 236 | 1708 |
| 1979 | 3063 | 610 | 762 | 302 | 1636 | 522 | 2665 |
| 1980 | 5088 | 336 | 1125 | 582 | 3963 | 834 | 2613 |
| 1981 | 662 | 151 | 146 | 73 | 848 | 1474 | 1919 |
| 1982 | 381 | 38 | 124 | 208 | 704 | 1215 | 1422 |
| 1983 | 434 | 55 | 43 | 357 | 128 | 860 | 1108 |
| 1984 | 706 | 118 | 84 | 434 | 155 | 858 | 924 |
| 1985 | 1245 | 446 | 53 | 108 | 569 | 1033 | 1056 |
| 1986 | 556 | 430 | 87 | 97 | 883 | 723 | 673 |
| 1987 | 923 | 478 | 61 | 367 | 621 | 1049 | 1100 |
| 1988 | 714 | 1454 | 7 | 192 | 754 | 1310 | 912 |
| 1989 | 760 | 2325 | 52 | 138 | 1096 | 1500 | 613 |
| 1990 | 364 | 2952 | 96 | 51 | 812 | 951 | 311 |

* FDR

Note that Brazil was also major purchaser of oil.
The Soviet Union barely figures on IFS data

Source: IMF, direction of trade statistics yearbook, various editions

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